



THE REVEREND MATTHEW HENRY,
late Minister of the Gospel at Hackney

Obt. June 22, 1714. Æt: 52.

J. Taylor sculp. from a Painting in the possession of M^r Palmer.

SELECT SERMONS

OF THE LATE REVEREND

Mr. MATTHEW HENRY,

On the following Subjects :

A Church in the House.

CHRIST'S Favour to little Children.

On Catechizing Youth.

Sober - mindedness recommended to young Persons.

Directions for beginning — spending — and closing the Day with God.

The Folly of despising our own Souls.

Christianity no Sect, yet spoken against.

On the right Management of friendly Visits.

Disputes reviewed.

Separation without Rebellion.

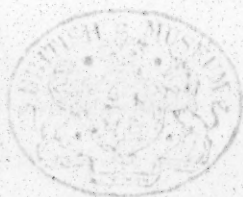
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By SAMUEL PALMER.

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T O

The CHURCH and CONGREGATION
assembling in Mare-Street, HACKNEY.

My dear Friends and Brethren,

THE Society of which you are members hath been blessed with several Pastors, who were not only eminent in their day as Preachers, but who distinguished themselves by their Publications, which are still held in very high esteem by the most serious and judicious christians. The names of BATES and HENRY (not to omit that of BARKER) are still famous in our churches.

While I esteem it no small honour to succeed such men, it is a peculiar pleasure to me that you still retain a relish for that evangelical and practical strain of preaching for which they were so eminent. Be assured, that in this respect it is my ambition to gratify you: for I know of no human writings which I prefer to theirs, nor any uninspired minister whose character I more highly venerate, and whose spirit I would rather wish to imbibe and propagate.

These Sermons of Mr. HENRY are favourite discourses with me, and I hope they
will

iv D E D I C A T I O N.

will prove an acceptable present to you. Let me entreat you to join with me in prayer to the God of all grace, to render them useful, particularly in reviving the interest of religion in your families and among the rising generation.

Accept this public testimony of my gratitude for the candour and kindness which, for almost twenty years, I have experienced from you, and believe me to be

Your faithful friend

HACKNEY,
Nov. 6. 1781.

and willing servant,

for Jesus' sake,

SAMUEL PALMER.

C O N.

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A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

IT is proper to inform the Reader that, besides the Divisions made in the following Sermons, on account of their length, a few passages are omitted, which were either redundant, or peculiar to the time and place in which they were delivered. Some small inaccuracies also are corrected, &c. But no greater liberty has been taken than it was presumed every reader in the present day would approve and expect.

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N A M E S

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S E R M O N I.

A Church in the House : A Discourse concerning Family-Religion.

I COR. XVI. 19.

—*With the Church that is in their House.*

SOME very good interpreters understand this of a settled, stated, solemn meeting of christians at the House of *Aquila* and *Priscilla*, for publick worship: and they were glad of houses to meet in, where they wanted those better conveniences, which the church was afterwards in her prosperous days accommodated with. When they had not such places as they could wish, they thankfully made use of such as they could get.

But others think it is meant only of their own family, and the strangers within their gates; among whom there was so much piety and devotion, that it might well be called *a church*, or *religious house*. Thus the ancients generally understand it. Nor was it only *Aquila* and *Priscilla*, whose house was thus celebrated for religion here, and *Rom.* 16. 5. but *Nymphas* also had a church in his house, *Col.* 4. 15. and *Philemon*, ver. 2. Not but that others, to whom and from whom salutations are sent in *Paul's* epistles, made conscience of keeping up religion in their
B families;

families ; but these are mentioned, probably because their families were more numerous than most of those other families were ; which made their family-devotions more solemn, and consequently more taken notice of.

In this sense I shall take it, from hence to recommend *Family-Religion* to you, under the notion of *a Church in the House*. When we see your publick assemblies so well frequented, we cannot but thank God, and take courage. Your diligent attendance on the ministry of the word and prayer, is to your praise, and I trust, thro' grace, it redounds to your spiritual comfort and benefit. But my subject at this time will lead me to inquire into the state of religion in your private houses ; whether it flourish or wither *there* ? Herein I desire to deal plainly and faithfully with your consciences, and I beg you will give them leave to deal so with you.

The pious and zealous endeavours both of magistrates and ministers for the reformation of manners, and the suppression of vice and profaneness, are the joy and encouragement of all good people in the land, and a happy indication that God hath yet mercy in store for us : now I know not any thing that will contribute more to the furtherance of this good work than the bringing of family-religion more into practice and reputation. Here the reformation must begin. Other methods may check the disease we complain of, but this, if it might universally obtain, would cure it. Salt must be cast into these springs, and then the waters would be healed.

The lesson then which I would recommend to you from this text is this ;

That the families of Christians should be little Churches : or, that where-ever we have a house, God should have a Church in it.

Unhappy

Unhappy contests there have been, and still are, among wise and good men about the constitution, order and government of churches. God by his grace heal these breaches, lead us into all truth, and dispose our minds to love and peace; that while we endeavour herein to walk according to the light God hath given us, we may charitably believe that others do so too; longing to be where we shall be all of a mind!

But I am now speaking of churches, concerning which there is no controversy. All agree that masters of families, who profess religion, and the fear of God themselves, should, according to the talents they are intrusted with, maintain and keep up religion and the fear of God in their families, *as those that must give an account*: and that families as such should contribute to the support of christianity in a nation, whose honour and happiness it is to be a christian nation. As nature makes families little kingdoms, so grace makes families little churches; and those were the primitive churches of the Old-Testament, before *men began to call upon the name of the Lord* in solemn assemblies, and *the sons of God came together to present themselves* before him.

Not that I would have these family-churches set up and kept up, in competition with, much less in contradiction to, public religious assemblies, which ought always to have the preference. *The Lord loveth the gates of Sion more than all the dwellings of Jacob*, (Psal. 87. 2.) and so must we; we must *not forsake the assembling of ourselves together*, under colour of *exhorting one another daily* at home. Far be it from us to offer any thing that may countenance the invading of the office of the ministry, or the usurping or superseding of the administration of sacraments. No, but these family-churches (which are but *figuratively* so) must be erected and maintained

in subordination to those more sacred and solemn establishments.

Now that I may more distinctly open to you, and press upon you, this great duty of family-religion, from the example of this and other texts of a church in the house, I shall endeavour,

- I. To shew what this church in the house is, and when our families may be called churches.
- II. To persuade you by some motives thus to turn your families into churches. And then,
- III. To address you upon the whole matter by way of application.

I. I am to tell you what that Family-Religion is which will be a Church in the House, and wherein it doth consist.

1. Churches are societies devoted to God, they are called out of the world, taken in out of the common, to be inclosures for God: he hath set them apart for himself; and because he hath chosen them, they also have chosen him, and set themselves apart for him. The Jewish church was separated to God for a peculiar people, a kingdom of priests. Thus our houses must be churches. With ourselves we must give up our houses to the Lord, to be to him *for a name and a people*. All the interest we have, both in our relations, and in our possessions, must be consecrated to God; as under the law all that the servant had was his master's for ever, after he had consented to have his ear bored to the door-post. When God effectually called *Abram* out of *Ur* of the *Chaldees*, his family put on the face of a particular church; for in obedience to God's precept, and in dependence on God's promise, they took all the substance they had gathered, and the souls they had gotten, and put themselves and their all under a divine conduct and government, *Gen. 12. 5*. His was a great family, not only numerous, but very considerable;
the

the father of it was the father of all them that believe; but even little families, jointly and entirely given up to God, so become churches. When all the members of the family yield themselves to God, *subscribe with their hands to be the Lord's*, and *surname themselves by the name of Israel*, and the master of the family, with himself, gives up all his right, title, and interest, in his house, and all that belongs to it, unto God, to be used for him, and disposed of by him, here is a Church in the House.

Baptism was ordained for the discipling of nations, *Mat. 28. 19.* that the kingdoms of the world, as such, might, by the conversion of their people to the faith of Christ, and the consecration of their powers and governments to the honour of Christ, become his kingdoms, *Rev. 11. 15.* Thus by baptism households likewise are discipled, as *Lydia's* and the *Jaylor's*, *Acts 16. 15. 33.* and in their family-capacity are given up to him, who is in a particular manner *the God of all the families of Israel*, *Jer. 30. 1.* Circumcision was at first a family-ordinance, and in that particular, as well as others, baptism doth somewhat symbolize with it. When the children of christian parents are by baptism admitted members of the universal church, as their right to baptism is grounded upon, so their communion with the universal church is, during their infancy, maintained and kept up chiefly by, their immediate relation to these Churches in the House; to them therefore they are first given back, and in them they are deposited, under the tuition of them, to be trained up till they become capable of a place and a name in particular churches of larger figure and extent. So that baptized families, that own their baptism and adhere to it, and in their joint and relative capacity make profession of the christian faith, may so far be called little churches.

More than once in the Old Testament we read of the dedication of private houses. It is spoken of as

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a common practice, *Deut. 20. 5. What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it?* i. e. taken possession of it; in the doing of which it was usual to dedicate it to God by some solemn acts of religious worship. The 30th Psalm is entitled, *a psalm or song at the dedication of the house of David.* It is a good thing when a man hath a house of his own, thus to convert it into a church, by dedicating it to the service and honour of God, that it may be a *Bethel*, a house of God, and not a *Bethaven*, a house of vanity and iniquity. Every good christian that is a householder no doubt doth this habitually and virtually; having *first given his own self to the Lord*, he freely surrenders all he hath to him. but it may be of good use to do it actually and expressly, and often to repeat this act of resignation: *this stone which I have set for a pillar shall be God's house*, *Gen. 28. 22.* Let all I have in my house, and all I do in it, be for the glory of God. I own him to be my great landlord, and I hold all from and under him; to him I promise to pay the rents (the quit-rents) of daily praises and thanksgivings; and to do the services, the easy services of gospel obedience. Let *holiness to the Lord* be written upon the house, and all the furniture of it, according to the word which God hath spoken, *Zeck. 14. 20, 21.* That every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the Lord of Hosts. Let God by his providence dispose of the affairs of my family, and by his grace dispose the affections of all in my family, according to his will, to his own praise. Let me and mine be only, wholly, and for ever his.

Be persuaded, brethren, thus to dedicate your houses to God, and beg of him to come and take possession of them. If you never did it, do it to-night with all possible seriousness and sincerity. *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the king of Glory shall come in.*

Bring the ark of the Lord into the tent you have pitched, and oblige yourselves, and all yours to attend it. Look upon your houses as temples for God, places for worship, and all your possessions as dedicated things, to be used for God's honour, and not to be alienated or profaned.

2. Churches are societies employed for God, pursuant to the true intent and meaning of this dedication.

There are three things necessary to the well-being of a church, and which are most considerable in the constitution of it. These are *doctrine*, *worship* and *discipline*. Where the truths of Christ are professed and taught, the ordinances of Christ administered and observed, and due care taken to put the laws of Christ in execution, among all that profess themselves his subjects, and this under the conduct and inspection of a gospel-ministry; there is a church. And something answerable hereunto there must be in our families, to denominate them little churches.

Masters of families, who preside in the other affairs of the house, must go before their households in the things of God. They must be as prophets, priests and kings, in their own families; and as such they must keep up family-doctrine, family-worship, and family-discipline: then is there a Church in the House, and this is the family-religion I am persuading you to.

First, Keep up Family-Doctrine. It is not enough that you and yours are baptized into the christian faith, and profess to own the truth as it is in Jesus, but care must be taken, and means used that you and yours be well acquainted with that truth, and that you grow in that acquaintance, to the Honour of Christ and his holy religion: and the improvement of your own minds, and theirs that are under your charge. You must deal with your families as men of knowledge, 1 *Pet.* 3. 7.

i. e. as men that desire to grow in knowledge yourselves, and to communicate your knowledge for the benefit of others.

That you may keep up family-doctrine,

1.) You must read the scriptures to your families, in a solemn manner, requiring their attendance on your reading, and their attention to it; and enquiring sometimes whether they understand what you read? I hope you are none of you without bibles in your houses, but that you have store of bibles, every one a bible. Thanks be to God we have them cheap and common in a language that we understand. The book of the law is not such a rarity with us as it was in *Josiah's* time. We need not fetch this knowledge from afar, nor send from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth, to seek the word of God; no, the word is nigh us. When popery reigned in our land, *English* bibles were scarce things; a load of hay (it is said) was once given for one torn leaf of a bible. But now bibles are to be had at an easy rate. If any of you are not able to buy them, you may know where to beg them. It is better to be without bread in your houses than without bibles, for the words of God's mouth are and should be to you *more than your necessary food*.

But what will it avail you to have bibles in your houses, if you do not use them? To have the *great things of God's law and gospel written to you*, if you *count them as a strange thing*? You look daily into your shop-books, and perhaps into the news-papers, and shall your bibles be thrown by as an almanack out of date? It is not now penal to read the scriptures in your families, as it was in the dawning of the reformation from popery, when there were those that were accused and prosecuted for "reading in
" a certain great heretical book, called an English
" Bible." The Philistines do not now *stop up these wells,*

wells, (as *Gen. 26. 18.*) nor do the *shepherds drive away* your flocks from them, (as *Exod. 2. 17.*) nor are they as a *spring shut up*, or a *fountain sealed*: but the gifts given to men have been happily employed in rolling away the stone from the mouth of these wells. You have great encouragements to read the scripture; for notwithstanding the malicious endeavours of atheists to vilify sacred things, the knowledge of the scripture is still in reputation with all wise and good men. You have also variety of excellent helps to understand the scripture, and to improve your reading of it; so that if you or yours *perish for lack of this knowledge*, (as you certainly will if you persist in the neglect of it) the guilt will lie wholly at your own doors.

Let me therefore with all earnestness press it upon you to make the solemn reading of the scripture a part of your daily worship in your families. When you speak to God by prayer, be willing to hear him speak to you in his word, that there may be a compleat communion between you and God. This will add much to the solemnity of your family-worship, and will make the transaction the more awful and serious, if it be done in a right manner; which will conduce much to the honour of God, and your own and your families edification. It will help to make the word of God familiar to yourselves, and your children and servants, that you may be ready and *mighty in the scriptures*, and may from thence be *thoroughly furnished for every good word and work*. It will likewise furnish you with matter and words for prayer, and so be helpful to you in other parts of the service. If some parts of scripture seem less edifying, let those be most frequently read that are most so. *David's psalms* are of daily use in devotion, and *Solomon's proverbs* in conversation; it will be greatly to your advantage to be well versed in them. And I hope I need not press any christian

to the study of the New Testament, nor any christian parents to the frequent instructing of their children in the pleasant and profitable histories of the Old Testament. When you only hear your children read the bible, they are tempted to look upon it as no more than a school-book; but when they hear you read it to them in a solemn, religious manner, it comes, as it ought, with more authority. Those masters of families who make conscience of doing this daily, morning and evening, reckoning it part of that which the duty of every day requires, I am sure have comfort and satisfaction in so doing, and find it contributes much to their own improvement in christian knowledge, and the edification of those that dwell under their shadow; and the more, if those that are ministers expound, and other masters of families read some plain and profitable exposition of what is read.

The seasonable reading of other good books also will contribute very much to family-instruction. In helps of this kind we are as happy as any people under the sun, if we have but hearts to use them, as those that must give an account.

2.) You must also catechize your children and servants, so long as they continue in that age of life which needs this milk. Oblige them to learn some good catechism by heart, and to keep it in remembrance; and by familiar discourse with them help them to understand it, as they become capable. It is an excellent method of catechizing, which God himself directs us to, *Deut. 6. 7. To teach our children the things of God, by talking of them as we sit in the house, and go by the way, when we lie down, and when we rise up.* It is good to keep up stated times for this service, and be constant to them, as those that know how industrious the enemy is to *sow tares, while men sleep.* If this good work be not kept going forward, it will of itself go backward.

Wisdom

Wisdom will direct you to manage your catechizing, as well as the other branches of Family-religion, so as not to make it a burden, but as much as may be a pleasure to those under your charge, that the blame may lie wholly upon their own impiety, and not at all upon your imprudence, if they should say, *behold what a weariness is it!*

This way of instruction by catechizing doth in a special manner belong to the Church in the House; for that is the nursery in which *the trees of righteousness* are reared, that afterwards are *planted in the courts of our God*. Publick catechizing will turn to little account without family catechizing. The labour of ministers in instructing youth, and feeding the lambs of the flock, proves to many labour in vain, because masters of families do not do their duty, in preparing them for publick instruction, and examining their improvement by it. As mothers are children's best nurses, so parents are or should be their best teachers. *Solomon's* father was his tutor, *Prov.* 4. 3, 4. And he never forgot the lessons his mother taught him, *Prov.* 31. 1.

The baptism of your children, as it laid a strong and lasting obligation upon them to live in the fear of God, so it brought you under the most powerful engagements imaginable to bring them up in that fear. The child you gave up to God to be dedicated to him, and admitted a member of Christ's visible church, was in God's name given back to you, with the same charge that *Pharaoh's* daughter gave to *Moses's* mother, *take this child and nurse it for me*. And in nursing it for God, you nurse it for better preferment than that of being *called the son of Pharaoh's daughter*. It is worth observing, That he to whom God first did the honour of entailing the seal of the covenant upon his seed, was eminent for this part of Family-Religion: I know *Abraham*, saith God, that he will *command his children and his household*

household after him to keep the way of the Lord, Gen. 18.

19. Those therefore who would have the comfort of God's covenant with them and their seed, and would share in that blessing of *Abraham* which comes upon the Gentiles, must herein follow the example of faithful *Abraham*. The entail of the covenant of grace is forfeited and cut off, if care be not taken with it to transmit the means of grace. To what purpose were they disciplined if they be not taught? Why did you give them a christian name, if you will not give them the knowledge of Christ and christianity? God has owned them as his children, and *born unto him*, (Ezek. 16. 20.) and therefore he expects they should be brought up for him. You are unjust to your God, unkind to your children, and unfaithful to your trust, if having by baptism entered your children in Christ's school, and listed them under his banner, you do not make conscience of training them up in the learning of Christ's scholars, and under the discipline of his foldiers.

Consider what your children are now capable of, even in the days of their childhood. They are capable of receiving impressions now which may abide upon them while they live; they *are turned as clay to the seal*, and now is the time to apply to them the *seal of the Living God*. They are capable of honouring God now, if they be well taught; and by their joining, as they can, in religious services with so much reverence and application as their age will admit, God is honoured, and you in them present to him *living sacrifices, holy and acceptable*. The hosannas even of children well taught will be the perfecting of praise, and highly pleasing to the Lord Jesus.

Consider what your children are designed for (we hope) in this world; they must be a *seed to serve the Lord*, which shall be *accounted to him for a generation*. They are to bear up the name of Christ in their day,

day, and into their hands must be transmitted *that good thing* which is *committed to us*. They are to be praising God on earth, when we are praising him in heaven. Let them then be *brought up accordingly*, that they may answer the end of their birth and being. They are designed for the service of their generation, and to do good in their day. Consult the public welfare then, and let nothing be wanting on your parts to qualify them for usefulness, according as their place and capacity is.

Consider especially what they are designed for in another world. They are made for eternity. Every child thou hast hath a precious and immortal soul, that must be for ever either in heaven or hell, according as it is prepared in this present state; and perhaps it must remove to that world of spirits very shortly: and will it not be very sad, if through your carelessness and neglect your children should learn the ways of sin, and perish eternally in those ways? Give them warning, that, if possible, you may deliver their souls, at least that you may deliver your own, and may not bring their curse and God's too, their blood and your own too, upon your heads.

I know you cannot give grace to your children, nor is a religious conversation the certain and necessary consequent of a religious education; *the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong*: but if you make conscience of doing your duty, by keeping up family-doctrine, if you teach them the good and the right way, and warn them of by-paths; if you reprove, exhort, and encourage them as there is occasion; if you pray with them, and for them, and set them a good example, and at last consult their soul's welfare in the disposal of them, you have done your part, and may comfortably leave the issue and success with God.

Secondly, Keep up Family-Worship.

You

You must not only as prophets teach your families, but as priests must go before them, in offering the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise. Herein likewise you must tread in the steps of faithful *Abraham*, whose sons you are while thus you do well. You must not only like him instruct your household, but like him you must with them *call on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God*, Gen. 21. 33. Wherever he *pitched his tent*, there he *built an altar unto the Lord*, Gen. 12. 7, 8. 13. 4, 18. tho' he was yet in an unsettled state, but a stranger and a sojourner; tho' he was among jealous and envious neighbours, for the *Canaanite* and the *Perizzite* dwelled then in the land, yet wherever *Abraham* had a tent God had an altar in it, and he himself served at that altar. Herein he has left us an example.

Families, as such, have many errands at the throne of grace, which furnish them with matter and occasion for family-prayer every day: errands which cannot be done so well in secret or publick; but are fittest to be done by the family in consort, and apart from other families. And it is good for those that go before the rest in family devotion, ordinarily to dwell most upon the concerns of those that join in their family-capacity, that it may be indeed a family-prayer, not only offered up in and by the family, but suited to it. In this and other services we should endeavour not only to say something, but something to the purpose.

Five things especially you should have upon your heart in your family-prayer, and should endeavour to bring something of each, more or less, into every prayer with your families.

1.) You ought to make family-acknowledgments of your dependance upon God and his providence, as you are a family. Our great business in all acts of religious worship is to *give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name*; and this we must do in our family-worship.

worship. Give honour to God as the founder of families by his ordinance, because *it was not good for man to be alone*; as the founder of your families by his providence, for he it is that *buildeth the house, and setteth the solitary in families*. Give honour to him as the owner and ruler of families; acknowledge that you and yours are his, under his government, and at his dispose, as *the sheep of his pasture*. Especially adore him as *the God of all the families of Israel*, in covenant relation to them, and having a particular concern for them above others, *Jer. 31. 1*. Give honour to the Great Redeemer as the head of all the churches, even those in your houses; call him the master of the family, and the great upholder and benefactor of it; for he it is *in whom all the families of the earth are blessed*, *Gen. 12. 3*. All family-bleffings are owing to Christ, and come to us thro' his hand, by his blood. Own your dependance upon God, and your obligations to Christ for all good things *pertaining both to life and godliness*; and make conscience of paying homage to your chief lord, and never set up a title to any of your enjoyments in competition with his.

2.) You ought to make family-confessions of your sins against God; those sins you have contracted the guilt of in your family-capacity. We read in scripture of the *iniquity of the house*, as of *Eli's*, *1 Sam. 3. 13, 14*. Iniquity visited *upon the children*: sins that bring wrath upon families, and a curse that enters into the house to consume it, *Zeck. 5. 4*. How sad is the condition of those families that sin together, and never pray together! that by concurring in frauds, quarrels, and excesses, by strengthening one another's hands in impiety and profaneness, fill the measure of family-guilt, and never agree together to do any thing to empty it.

And even religious families, that are not polluted with gross and scandalous sins, yet have need to
join

join every day in the solemn acts and expressions of repentance before God for their sins of daily infirmity. Their vain words, and unprofitable converse among themselves; their manifold defects in relative duties, provoking one another's lusts and passions, instead of *provoking one another to love and to good works*: these ought to be confessed and bewailed by the family together, that God may be glorified, and what hath been amiss may be amended for the future. It was not only in a time of great and extraordinary repentance that families *mourned apart*, Zech. 12. 11. but in the stated returns of the day of expiation the priest was particularly to *make atonement for his household*, Lev. 16. 17. In many things we all offend God, and one another; and a penitent confession of it in prayer together, will be the most effectual way of reconciling ourselves both to God, and to one another. The best families, and those in which piety and love prevail most, yet in many things come short, and do enough every day to bring them upon their knees at night.

3.) You ought to offer up family-thanksgivings for the blessings which you, with your families, receive from God. Many are the mercies which you enjoy the sweetness and benefit of in common; which if wanting to one, all the family would be sensible of it. Hath not God *made a hedge of protection about you, and your houses, and all that you have?* (Job 1. 10.) Hath he not created a defence upon *every dwelling-place of Mount Zion*, as well as upon *her assemblies?* (Isa. 4. 5.) The dreadful alarms of a storm, and the desolations made as by a fire, once in an age, should make us sensible of our obligations to the divine Providence for our preservation from tempests and fire every day and every night. *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed*, and buried in the ruins of our houses. When the whole family comes together safe in the morning

morning from their respective retirements, and when they return safe at night from their respective employments, there having been no disaster, no adversary, no evil occurrence, it is so reasonable, and I may say so natural for them to join together in solemn thanksgivings to their great Protector, that I wonder how any that believe a God, and a Providence, can omit it. Have you not health in your family, sickness kept or taken from the midst of you? Doth not God bring plentifully into your hands, and increase your substance? Have you not your *table spread* and your *cup running over*, and manna rained about your tents? and doth not the whole family share in the comfort of all this? Shall not then the voice of thanksgiving be in those *tabernacles* where *the voice of rejoicing is*? Psal. 118. 15. Is the vine by the house-side fruitful and flourishing, and are the olive plants round the table green and growing? Are family-relations comfortable and agreeable, not broken nor imbittered, and shall not that God be acknowledged herein who makes every creature to be that to us which it is? Shall not the God of your family-mercies be the God of your family-praises? and that daily?

The benefit and honour of your being christian families, your having in God's house, and within his walls, a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters, and the salvation this brings to your house, furnisheth you with abundant matter for joint thanksgivings. *You hath he known above all the families of the earth*, and therefore he expects in a special manner to be owned by you. Of all houses, the *house of Israel*, the *house of Aaron*, and the *house of Levi*, have most reason to *bless the Lord*, and to say that *his mercy endureth for ever*.

4.) You ought to present your family-petitions for the mercy and grace which your families stand in need of. Daily bread is received by families

together, and we are taught not only to pray for it every day, but to pray together for it, saying, *Our Father, give us this day our daily bread.* There are affairs and employments which the family is jointly concerned in the success of, and therefore should jointly ask of God wisdom for the management of them, and prosperity therein. There are family-cares to be cast upon God by prayer; family-comforts to be sought for; and family-crosses which they should together beg for the sanctification and removal of. Hereby your children will be more effectually possessed with a belief of, and regard to the divine Providence, than by all the instructions you can give them; which will look best in their eye, when thus reduced to practice by your daily acknowledging God in all your ways.

You desire that God will give wisdom and grace to your children; you *travel in birth again till you see Christ formed in them*; you pray for them. It is well, but it is not enough; you must pray *with* them; let them hear you pray to God for a blessing upon the good instructions and counsels you give them; it may perhaps put them upon praying for themselves, and increase their esteem both of you, and of the good lessons you teach them. You would have your servants diligent and faithful, and this perhaps would help to make them so. Masters do not give to their servants that which is just and equal, if they do not continue in prayer with them. See *Col. 4. 1, 2.*

There are some temptations which families, as such, lie open to. Busy families are in temptation to worldliness, and neglect of religious duties; mixed families are in temptation to discord, and mutual jealousies; decaying families are in temptation to distrust, discontent, and indirect courses to help themselves: they should therefore not only
watch,

watch, but *pray* together, that they be not overcome by the temptations they are exposed to.

There are family blessings which God hath promised, and for which he will be fought unto, such as those on the *house* of *Obed-edom* for *the Ark's sake*; or the mercy which *Paul* begs for *the house of Onesiphorus*, 2 Tim. i. 16. These joint blessings must be sued out by joint prayers. There is a special blessing which God commands upon families that *dwell together in unity*, (Psal. 133. 1, 3.) which they must seek for by prayer, and come together to seek for it, in token of that unity which qualifies for it. Where God commands the blessing, we must beg the blessing. God by promise blebseth *David's* house, and therefore *David* by prayer blebseth it too, 2 Sam. 6. 20.

5.) You ought to make family-intercessions for others also. There are families you stand related to, or which by neighbourhood, friendship or acquaintance, you become interested in, and concerned for; and these you should recommend in your prayers to the grace of God, and your family being joined with you in the alliances should join with you in those prayers. Evil tidings perhaps are received from relations at a distance, which are the grief of the family; God must then be sought unto by the family for succour and deliverance. Some of the branches of the family are perhaps in distant countries, and in dangerous circumstances, and you are solicitous about them; it will be a comfort to yourselves, and perhaps of advantage to them, *to make mention of them daily in your family-prayers*. The benefit of prayer will reach far, because he that hears prayer can extend his hand of power and mercy to the *utmost corners of the earth*, and to them that are *afar off upon the sea*.

In the publick peace likewise we and our families have peace; and therefore if we forget thee, O *Je-*

rusalem, we are unworthy ever to stand in thy courts, or dwell within thy walls. Our families should be witnesses for us that we pray daily for the land of our nativity, and the prosperity of all its interests; that praying every where we make supplication for the *king and all in authority*, 1 Tim. 2. 2, 8. That we bear upon our hearts the concerns of God's church abroad, especially the suffering parts of it. Thus keeping up a spiritual communion with all the families that *in every place call on the name of the Lord Jesus*.

In a word, let us go by this rule in our family-devotions; whatever is the matter of our care, let it be the matter of our prayer: and let us allow no care which we cannot in faith spread before God; and whatever is the matter of our rejoicing, let it be the matter of our thanksgiving; and let us withhold our hearts from all those joys which do not dispose us for the duty of praise.

Under this head of family worship I must not omit to recommend to you the singing of psalms in your families, as a part of daily worship, especially sabbath worship. This is a part of religious worship, which participates both of the word and prayer; for therein we are not only to give glory to God, but to *teach and admonish one another*; it is therefore very proper to make it a transition from the one to the other. It will warm and quicken you, refresh and comfort you; and perhaps if you have little children in your houses, they will sooner take notice of it than of any other part of your family-devotion; and some good impressions may thereby be insensibly fastened upon them.

Thirdly, Keep up Family-Discipline, that so you may have a compleat Church in your House, tho' little. Reason teacheth us that *every man should bear rule in his own house*, Esth. 1. 22. And since that as well as other power is of God, it ought to be employed

employed for God; and they that so rule must be *just, ruling in his fear.* *Joshua* looked further than the acts of religious worship, when he made that pious resolution, *As for me and my house we will serve the Lord,* Josh. 24. 15. For we do not serve him in sincerity and truth (which is the service he there speaks of, v. 14.) if we and ours serve him only on our knees, and do not take care to serve him in all the instances of a religious conversation. Those only that have *clean hands* and a *pure heart*, are accounted *the generation of them that seek God*, Psal. 24. 4, 6. And without this those that pretend to *seek God daily*, do but mock him, Isa. 58. 2.

The authority God hath given you over your children and servants is principally designed for this end, that you may thereby engage them for God and godliness. If you use it only to oblige them to do your will, and so to serve your pride, and to do your business, and so to serve your worldliness, you do not answer the great end of your being invested with it: you must use it for God's honour, by it to engage them as far as you can to do the will of God, and mind the business of religion. Holy *David* not only blessed his household, but took care to keep good order in it, as appears by that plan of his family-discipline, which we have in the 101st Psalm, a psalm which Mr. *Fox* tells us that blessed martyr bishop *Ridley* often read to his family, as the rule by which he resolved to govern it.

You are made keepers of the vineyard, be faithful to your trust, and carefully watch over those that are under your charge, knowing you must give account.

1. Countenance every thing that is good and praise-worthy in your children and servants. It is as much your duty to commend and encourage

those in your family that do well, as to reprove and admonish those that do amiss; and if you take delight only in blaming that which is culpable, and are backward to praise that which is laudable, you give occasion to suspect something of an ill nature, not becoming a good man, much less a good christian. It should be a trouble to us when we have a reproof to give, but a pleasure to us to say with the apostle, *1 Cor. 11. 2. Now I praise you.*

Most people will be easier led than driven, and we all love to be spoken fair: when you see any thing that is hopeful and promising in your inferiors, any thing of a towardly and tractable disposition, much more any thing of a pious affection to the things of God, you should contrive to encourage it. Smile upon them when you see them set their faces heavenwards, and take the first opportunity to let them know you observe it, and are well pleased with it, and do not despise the day of small things. This will quicken them to continue and abound in that which is good, it will hearten them against the difficulties they see in their way, and perhaps may turn the wavering, trembling scale the right way, and effectually determine their resolutions to cleave to the Lord. When you see them forward to come to family-worship, attentive to the word, devout in prayer, industrious to get knowledge, afraid of sin, and careful to do their duty, let them have the praise of it, for you have the comfort of it, and God must have all the glory. Draw them with the cords of a man, hold them with the bands of love; so shall your rebukes, when they are necessary, be the more acceptable and effectual. The great shepherd gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom, and gently leads them, and so should you.

2. Discountenance every thing that is evil in your children and servants. Use your authority
for

for the preventing of sin, and the suppressing of every root of bitterness, lest it spring up, and trouble you, and thereby many be defiled. Frown upon every thing that brings sin into your families, and introduceth any ill words, or ill practices. Pride and passion, strife and contention, idleness and intemperance, lying and slandering, these are sins which you must not connive at, nor suffer to go without a rebuke. If you return to the Almighty, this among other things is required of you, that you put away iniquity, all iniquity, (these and other the like iniquities,) far from your tabernacle, *Job* 22. 23. Make it to appear, that in the government of your families you are more jealous for God's honour, than for your own authority and interest; and shew yourselves more displeased at that which is an offence to God, than at that which is only an affront or damage to yourselves.

You must indeed be careful not to provoke your children to wrath, lest they be discouraged; and as to your servants, it is your duty to forbear or moderate threatning: yet you must also with holy zeal and resolution, and the meekness of wisdom, keep good order in your families, and set no wicked thing before your eyes, but witness against it. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Be afraid of having wicked servants in your houses, lest your children learn their way, and get a snare to their souls. Drive away with an angry countenance all that evil communication which corrupts good manners, that your houses may be habitations of righteousness, and sin may never find shelter in them.

P A R T II.

II. I come now to offer some Motives to persuade you thus to turn your families into little churches. And O that I could find out acceptable

words, with which to reason with you, so as to prevail! *Suffer me a little, and I will shew you what is to be said on God's behalf*, which is worth your consideration.

1. If your families be little churches, God will come to you, and dwell with you in them; for he hath said concerning the church, *this is my rest for ever, here will I dwell*. It is a very desirable thing to have the gracious presence of God with us in our families, that presence which is promised where *two or three are gathered together in his name*. This was what *David* was so desirous of, *Psal. 101. 2. O when wilt thou come unto me!* His palace, his court, would be as a prison, as a dungeon to him, if God did not come to him, and dwell with him in it. And cannot your hearts witness to this desire? you that have houses of your own, would you not have God come to you, and dwell with you in them? Invite him then; beg his presence, court his stay. Nay, he invites himself to your houses by the offers of his favour and grace; *behold he stands at your door and knocks*: it is the voice of your beloved, open to him, and bid him welcome; meet him with your hosannas, blessed is he that cometh. He cometh peaceably, he brings a blessing with him, a *blessing which he will cause to rest upon the habitations of the righteous*, *Ezek. 44. 30*. He will command a blessing, which shall amount to no less than *life for evermore*, *Psal. 133. 3*. This presence and blessing of God will make your relations comfortable, your affairs successful, your enjoyments sweet; and *behold by it all things are made clean to you*. This will make your family-comforts, double comforts, and your family-crosses but half crosses. It will turn a tent into a temple, a cottage into a palace. *Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth*, are the houses in which God dwells.

Now

Now the way to have God's presence with you in your houses is to furnish them for his entertainment. It is not expected that you furnish them as his tabernacle of old was furnished, with blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen; but set up and keep up for him a throne and an altar, that from the altar you and yours may give glory to *him*, and from the throne he may give law to you and yours; and then you may be sure of his presence and blessing, and may solace yourselves from day to day in the comfort of it. God will be with you in a way of mercy while you are with him in a way of duty; *if you seek him he will be found of you.* The secret of God shall be in your tabernacle, as it was in Job's, Ch. 29. 4. as it is with the righteous, Psal. 25. 14. Prov. 3. 32, 33.

2. If you make your houses little churches, God will make them *little sanctuaries*, places of safety, nay, he will himself be as a *little sanctuary* to you, Ezek. 11. 16. The way to be safe in your houses, is to keep up religion and the fear of God in your houses; so shall you *dwell on high*, and *the place of your defence shall be the munition of rocks*, Isa. 33. 16. The law looks upon a man's house as his castle: religion makes it truly so. If God's grace be the *glory in the midst* of the house, his providence will *make a wall of fire round about it*, Zech. 2. 5. Satan found it to his confusion that God made a hedge about pious Job, about his house, and about all that he had on every side, so that he could not find one gap by which to break in upon him, Job 1. 10. Every dwelling-place of mount Sion shall be protected as the tabernacle was in the wilderness, for God hath promised to *create upon it a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night*, which shall be a defence upon all the glory, Isa. 4. 5. If we thus dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our life, by making our houses his houses, we shall

shall be hid in his pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide us, *Psal.* 27. 4, 5.

Wherever we encamp, under the banner of Christ, the angels of God will encamp round about us, and pitch their tents where we pitch ours; and we little think how much we owe to the ministration of the good angels, that we and ours are preserved from the malice of evil angels, who are continually seeking to do mischief to good people. There are terrors that fly by night and by day, from which they only that *abide under the shadow of the Almighty* can promise themselves to be safe, *Psal.* 91. 1, 5. Would you ensure your houses by the best policy of insurance, turn them into churches, and then they shall be taken under the special protection of him that *keeps Israel, and neither slumbers nor sleeps*; and if any damage come to them, it shall be made up in grace and glory. The way of duty is without doubt the way of safety.

Praying families are kept from more mischiefs than they themselves are aware of. They are not always sensible of the distinction which a kind Providence makes between them and others, though God is pleased sometimes to make it remarkable; as in the story which is credibly related of a certain village in the canton of *Bern* in *Switzerland*, consisting of ninety houses, which in the year 1584, were all destroyed by an earthquake, except one house, in which the good man and his family were at that time together praying. That promise is sure to all the seed of faithful *Abraham*, *Fear not, I am thy shield*, *Gen.* 15. 1. Wisdom herself hath past her word for it, *Prov.* 1. 33. Whoso hearkeneth to me, wherever he dwells, he shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet, not only from all real evil, but also from the amazing, tormenting *fear of evil*. Nothing can hurt, nothing needs frighten, those whom God protects.

3. If you have not a church in your house, it is to be feared *Satan* will have a *seat* there. If religion do not rule in your families, sin and wickedness will rule there. *I know where thou dwellest* (saith Christ to the angel of the church of *Pergamos*, Rev. 2. 13.) even where *Satan's seat* is. That was his affliction: but there are many whose sin it is; by their irreligion and immorality they allow Satan a seat in their houses, and that seat a throne. They are very willing that the *strong man armed* should keep his palace there, and that his goods should be at peace; and the surest way to prevent this is by setting up a Church in the house. It is commonly said, "that where God hath a church, the devil will have his chapel;" but it may more truly be said in this case, where God hath not a church, the devil will have his chapel. If the *unclean spirit* find the house in this sense empty, empty of good, though it be swept and garnished, he taketh to himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there.

Terrible stories have been told of houses haunted by the devil, and of the fear people have had of dwelling in such houses. Verily those houses in which rioting and drunkenness reign, in which swearing and cursing are the language of the house, or in which the more spiritual wickednesses of pride, malice, covetousness and deceit have the ascendant, may truly be said to be haunted by the devil, and they are most uncomfortable houses for any man to live in: they are (like *Babylon the Great* when fallen, Rev. 18. 2.) holds of foul spirits, and cages of unclean and hateful birds.

Now the way to keep sin out of the house is to keep up religion in it. This will be the most effectual antidote against Satan's poison. When *Abraham* thought concerning *Abimelech's* house, surely the fear of God is not in this place, he concluded no less but they will slay me for my wife's sake, Gen. 20. 11. Where no fear of God is, no reading, no praying,
no

no devotion, what can one expect but all that is bad? Where there is impiety there will be immorality; they that *restrain prayer, cast off fear*, Job 15. 4. But if religious worship have its place in the house, it may be hoped that vice will not have a place there. There is much of truth in that saying of good Mr. Dod, "either praying will make a man give over sinning, or sinning will make a man give over praying." There remains some hope concerning those who are otherwise bad, as long as they keep up prayer. Though there be a struggle between Christ and Belial in your houses, and the insults of sin and Satan are daring and threatening, yet as long as religion keeps the field, and the weapons of its warfare are made use of, we may hope the enemy will lose ground.

4. A Church in the House will make it very comfortable to yourselves. Nothing more agreeable to a gracious soul than constant communion with a gracious God. It is the *one thing it desires, to dwell in the house of the Lord*; here it is as in its element, this is its *rest for ever*. If therefore our houses be houses of the Lord, we shall for that reason love home, reckoning our daily devotion the sweetest of our daily delights; and our family-worship the most valuable of our family-comforts. This will sanctify to us all the conveniencies of our house, and reconcile us to the inconveniencies of it. What are *Solomon's* gardens, and orchards, and pools of water, and the other delights of the sons of men, in comparison with these delights of the children of God?

Family-religion will help to make our family-relations comfortable to us, by promoting love, preventing quarrels, and extinguishing heats that may at any time happen. A family living in the fear of God, and joining daily in religious worship, truly enjoys itself. *Behold how good, and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren thus to dwell together*; it is not only like ointment and perfume which rejoice the heart,
but

but like the holy ointment, the holy perfume, where-with *Aaron* the saint of the Lord was consecrated : not only like the common dew to the grass, but *like the dew that descendeth upon the mountains of Sion*, the holy mountains, *Psal.* 133. 1, 2. The communion of saints in that which is the work of saints, is without doubt the most pleasant communion here on earth, and the liveliest representation, and surest pledge of those everlasting joys which are the happiness of *the spirits of just men made perfect*, and the hopes of holy souls in this imperfect state.

Family-Religion will make the affairs of the family successful. Though they may not in every thing issue to our mind, yet we may by faith foresee that they will at last issue to our good. If this *beauty of the Lord our God be upon us* and our families, it will *prosper the work of our hands unto us*, yea, *the work of our hands* it will *establish*; or however, it will establish our hearts in that comfort which makes every thing that occurs easy, *Psal.* 90. 17. 112. 8. We cannot suppose our *mountain to stand so strong* but that it *will be moved*. Trouble in the flesh we must expect, and affliction in that from which we promise ourselves most comfort; and when the Divine Providence makes our houses houses of mourning, then it will be comfortable to have them *houses of prayer*, and to have had them so before. When sickness, and sorrow, and death come into our families, (and sooner or later they will come) it is good that they should find the wheels of prayer a going, and the family accustomed to seek God; for if we are then to begin this good work when distress forceth us to it, we shall drive heavily in it. They that pray constantly when they are well, may pray comfortably when they are sick.

5. A Church in the House will be a good legacy, nay, it will be a good inheritance, to be left to your children after you. Reason directs us to consult the

the welfare of posterity, and to *lay up in store a good foundation* for those that shall come after us to build upon; and we cannot do this better than by keeping up religion in our houses. A Family-Altar will be the best entail; your *children* will for this *rise up and call you blessed*; and it may be hoped they will be praising God for you, and praising God like you, here on earth, when you are praising him in heaven.

You will hereby leave your children the benefit of many prayers put up to heaven for them, which will be kept, as it were, upon the file there, to be answered to their comfort, when you are silent in the dust. The *seed of Jacob* know they do not *seek in vain*, tho' perhaps they live not to see their prayers answered. Some good christians that have made conscience of praying daily with and for their children, have been encouraged to hope that the children of so many prayers should not miscarry at last: and thus encouraged, *Joseph's* dying word hath been the language of many a dying christian's faith, *I die, but God will surely visit you*, Gen. 50. 24. I have heard of a hopeful son, who said he valued his interest in his pious father's prayers far more than his interest in his estate, tho' a considerable one.

You will likewise hereby leave your children a good example, which you may hope they will follow when they come into houses of their own. The usage and practice of your families is commonly transmitted from one generation to another. Bad customs are many times thus entailed. They that *burnt incense to the queen of heaven* learnt it of their fathers, Jer. 44. 17. And a *vain conversation* was thus *received by tradition*, 1 Pet. 1. 18. And why may not good customs be in like manner handed down to posterity? Thus we should make known the ways of God *to our children*, that they may *arise and declare them to their children*, (Psal. 78. 6.) and religion may
become

become an heirloom in our families. Let your children be able to say, when they are tempted to sit loose to religion, "that it was the way of their family, the good old way, in which their fathers walked, and in which they themselves were educated and trained up." And with this they may *answer him that reproacheth them.* Let Family-Worship, besides all its other pleas for itself, be able in your houses to plead prescription. And tho' to the acceptableness of the service it is requisite that it be done from a higher and better principle than purely to keep up the custom of the family, yet better so than not at all: the *form of godliness* may by the grace of God at length prove the happy vehicle of its *power*; and dry bones, whilst unburied, may be made to live. Thus *a good man leaves an inheritance to his children*; and *the generation of the upright shall be blessed.*

6. A Church in the House will contribute very much to the prosperity of the church of God in the nation. Family-Religion, if that prevail, will put a face of religion upon the land, and very much advance the beauty and peace of our *English Jerusalem.* This I hope we are all hearty well-wishers to; setting aside the consideration of parties, and separate interests, and burying all names of distinction in the grave of christian charity, we earnestly desire to see true catholick christianity, and serious godliness in the power of it, prevailing and flourishing in our land; to see knowledge filling the land, as the waters cover the sea; to see holiness and love giving law, and triumphing over sin and strife. We would see cause to call your city a *city of righteousness, a faithful city, its walls salvation, and its gates praise.* Now all this would be effected, if Family-Religion were generally set up, and kept up.

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When the wall was to be built about *Jerusalem*, it was presently done by this expedient, every one undertook to repair *over against his own* house. See *Neb. 3. 10, &c.* And if ever the decayed walls of the gospel *Jerusalem* be built up, it must be by the same method. Every one must sweep before his own door, and then the street will be clean. If there were a church in every house, there would be such a church in our land as would make it a *praise throughout the whole earth*. We cannot better serve our country than by keeping up religion in our families. Let families be well catechized, and then the public preaching of the word will be the more profitable, and the more successful. For want of this, when we speak never so plainly of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, to the most we do but *speake parables*. The book of the Lord is delivered to them that are not catechized, saying, read this, and they say *we are not learned*, (*Isa. 29. 12.*) learned enough in other things, but not in the one thing needful. But our work is easy with those that *from their childhood have known the holy scriptures*. If every family were a praying family, publick prayers would be the better joined with, more intelligently, and more affectionately; for the more we are used to prayer, the more expert we shall be in that holy and divine art of entering into the holiest in that duty. And publick reproofs and admonitions would be as a *nail in a sure place*, if masters of families would second them with their Family-Discipline, and so clench those nails. Religious families are blessings to the neighbourhood they live in, at least by their prayers. A good man thus becomes a publick good, and it is his ambition to be so. Tho' he see his childrens children, he has small joy of that if he does not see peace upon *Israel*, *Psal. 128. 5, 6.* And therefore postponing all his own interests and satisfactions, he

he sets himself to *seek the good of Jerusalem all the days of his life*. Happy were we if we had many such.—That which now remains is,

III. To address myself to you upon the whole matter by way of exhortation; and I pray you, *let my counsel be acceptable to you*; and while I endeavour to give *every one his portion*, let your consciences assist me herein, and take to yourselves that which belongs to you.

1. Let those masters of families that have hitherto lived in the neglect of Family-Religion be persuaded now to set it up, and from henceforward to make conscience of it.

I know it is hard to persuade people to begin even a good work that they have not been used to; yet if God by his grace set in with this word, who can tell but some may be wrought upon to comply with the design of it? We have no ill design in urging you to this part of your duty: we aim not at the advantage of a party, but purely at the prosperity of your families. We are sure we have reason on our side, and if you will but suffer that to rule you, we shall gain our point; and you will all go home firmly resolved, as *Joshua* was, that whatever others do themselves, and whatever they say of you, *you and your houses will serve the Lord*. God put it into, and keep it in the imagination of the thought of your heart, and establish your way therein before him!

Proceed in the right method. First set up Christ upon the throne in your hearts, and then set up a Church for Christ in your House. Let Christ *dwell in your hearts by faith*, and then let him dwell in your houses. You do not begin at the right end of your work, if you do not first give your own selves unto the Lord. God had respect first to *Abel*, and then to his offering. Let the fear and love of God rule in your hearts, and have a commanding sway and empire there, and then set up an altar for God in

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your tents; for you cannot do that acceptably till you have first consecrated yourselves as spiritual priests to God, to serve at that altar.

And when your hearts, like *Lydia's*, are opened to Christ, let your house, like hers, be opened to him too, *Acts* 16. 14, 15. Let there be churches in all your houses. Let those that have the stateliest, richest, and best furnished houses, reckon a church in them to be their best ornament. Let those that have houses of the greatest care and business reckon Family-Religion their best employment; and not neglect the *one thing needful*, while they are *careful and cumbered about many things*: nor let those that have close and mean habitations be discouraged; the ark of God long dwelt in *curtains*. Your dwelling is not so strait, but you may find room for a church in it. Church-work uses to be chargeable, but this is cheap. You need not make silver shrines, as they did for *Diana*, nor lavish gold out of the bag, as idolaters did in the service of their dunghill gods, (*Isa.* 46. 6.) No, an altar of earth shall you make to your God, (*Exod.* 20. 24.) and he will accept it.

Would you keep up your authority in your family? You cannot do it better than by keeping up religion in it. If ever a master of a family looks great, truly great, it is when he is going before his house in the service of God, and presiding among them in holy things. Then he shews himself worthy of double honour, when he *teacheth them the good knowledge of the Lord*, and is their mouth to God in prayer, *blessing them in the name of God*. Would you have your family-relations comfortable, your affairs successful, and give an evidence of your professed subjection to the gospel of Christ? Would you live in God's fear, and die in his favour, and escape that curse which is intailed upon prayerless families? Let religion in the power of it have its due

due place, that is, the uppermost places in your houses.

Many objections your own corrupt hearts will make against this duty; but they will all appear frivolous and trifling to a pious mind that is steadfastly resolved for God and godliness. You will never go on in your way to heaven, if you will be frightened by *lions in the street*. Whatever is the difficulty you dread, the discouragement you apprehend in it, I am confident it is not insuperable. But *he that observes the wind shall not sow, and he that regards the clouds shall not reap.*

Be not loth to begin a new custom, if it be a good custom, especially if it be a duty, (as certainly this is) which while you continue in the neglect of, you live in sin; for omissions are sins, and must come into Judgment. It may be you have been convinced that you ought to worship God in your families, and that it is a good thing to do so; but you have put it off to some more convenient season. Will you now at last take occasion from this sermon to begin it? Do not defer so good a work any longer. The present season is without doubt the most convenient season. Begin this day; let this be the day of your laying the foundation of the Lord's temple in your house; and then *consider from this day and upward*, as God by the prophet reasons with the people who neglected to build the temple, *Hag. 2. 18, 19.* Take notice whether God do not from this day remarkably bless you in all that you have and do.

Plead not your own weakness and inability to perform Family-Worship. Make use of the helps that are provided for you. Do as well as you can when you cannot do so well as you would, and God will accept of you *. You will write what is necessary

* Those who have not courage or ability to pray *extempore*, ought by all means to make use of *forms* rather than neglect Family

cessary for the carrying on of your trade, tho' you cannot write so fine a hand as some others can; and will you not be as wise in the work of your christian calling, to do your best, tho' it be far short of the best, rather than not do it at all? To him that hath *but one talent*, and trades with that, more shall be given; but from him that buries it, it shall be taken away. Be at some pains to make the scriptures familiar to you, especially *David's psalms*, and then you cannot be to seek for a variety of apt expressions proper to be used in prayer, for they will be always at your right-hand. Take with you words, those *words which the Holy Ghost teacheth*, for you cannot find more acceptable words.

And now shall I prevail with you in this matter? I am loth to leave you unresolved, or but almost persuaded. I beg of you for God's sake, for Christ's sake, for your own precious soul's sake, and for the children's sake of your own bodies, that you will live no longer in the neglect of so great, and necessary, and comfortable a duty as this of Family-Worship is. When we press upon you the more inward duties of faith and love, and the fear of God, it cannot be so evident that we succeed in our errand as it may be in this. It is certain you get no good by this sermon, but it is wholly lost upon you, if after you have heard it, or read it, you continue in the neglect of Family-Religion; and if still you *cast off fear, and restrain Prayer before God*. Your families will be witnesses against you that this work was undone; and this sermon will witness against you that it was not for want of

mily-Prayer. Besides the *Family-Prayer-Book*, there are many forms of prayer for families extant, which might be used with great advantage. There are some at the end of Mr. *Henry's* Method for prayer. And there are others by Mr. *Bennett*, Dr. *Doddridge*, and other able divines, which the Editor has some thoughts of collecting into one volume.

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being called to do it, but for want of a heart to do it when you were called. But *I hope better things of you, my brethren, and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak.*

2. Let those that have kept up Family-Worship formerly, but of late have left it off, be persuaded to revive it.

This perhaps is the case of some of you. You *remember the kindness of your youth, and the love of your espousals.* Time was when you *sought God daily, and delighted to know his ways,* as families that *did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinances of your God:* but now it is otherwise. The altar of the Lord is broken down and neglected, the daily sacrifice is ceased; and God hath kept an account how many days it hath ceased, whether you have or not, *Dan. 8. 13, 14.* Now God comes into your houses seeking fruit, but he finds none, or next to none; you are so eager in your worldly pursuits, that you have neither hearts nor time for religious exercises. You began at first frequently to omit the service, and a small matter served for an excuse to put it by, and so by degrees it came to nothing.

O that those who have thus *left their first love* would now *remember whence they are fallen, and repent, and do their first works.* Enquire how this good work came to be neglected. Was it not because your love to God cooled, and the love of the world prevailed? Have not you found a manifest decay in the prosperity of your souls since you let fall this good work? Hath not sin got ground in your hearts and in your houses? And tho' when you dropt your Family-Worship you promised yourselves that you would make it up in secret worship, because you were not willing to allow yourselves time for both, yet have ye not declined in that also? Are you not grown less frequent, and less fervent in your closet-devotions too? *Where is now the blessed-*

ness you have formerly *spoken of*? I beseech you lay out yourselves to retrieve it in time. Say as that penitent adultress, *Hos. 2. 7. I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now.* Cleanse the sanctuary, put away the strange Gods. Is money the God, or is the belly the God, that hath gained possession of thy heart and house? Whatever it is, cast it out. Repair the altar of the Lord, and begin again the daily sacrifice and oblation. Light the lamps again, and burn the incense. Rear up the tabernacle of *David* which is fallen down, lengthen its cords, and strengthen its stakes, and resolve it shall never be neglected again as it hath been. Perhaps you and your families have been manifestly under the rebukes of providence, since you left off your Duty, as *Jacob* was while he neglected to pay his vow. I beseech you *hear* at length the *voice of the rod, and of him that hath appointed it*, for it minds you of your forgotten vows, saying, *arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there, Gen. 35. 1.* Let the place thou dwellest in ever be a *Bethel*, so shall God dwell with thee there.

3. Let those that are remiss and negligent in their family-worship be awakened to more zeal and constancy.

Some of you perhaps have a Church in your House, but it is not a flourishing church. It is like the church of *Laodicea*, *neither cold nor hot*; or like the church of *Sardis*, in which *the things that remain are ready to die*: so that it hath little more than a *name to live*. Something of this work of the Lord is done for fashion-sake, but it is done *deceitfully*: You have *in your flock a male*, but you *vow and sacrifice unto the Lord a corrupt thing, Mal. 1. 14.* You grow customary in your accustomed services, and bring the *torn and the blind, the lame and the sick for sacrifice*; and you offer that to your God which you would scorn to offer to your governor.

vernor. Tho' it is but little you do, you think that too much, and say, Behold what a weariness is it! You can spare no time at all for it in the morning, nor any in the evening, till you are half asleep. It is thrust into a corner, and almost lost in a croud of worldly business and carnal converse. When it is done, it is done so slightly, in so much haste, and with so little reverence, that it makes no impression upon yourselves or your families. The bible lies ready, but you have no time to read. Your servants are otherwise employed, and you think it is no matter for calling them in. You yourselves can take up with a word or two of prayer, or rest in a lifeless, heartless tale of words. Thus it is every day, and perhaps little better on the Lord's day. No repetition of the word preached, no catechizing, no singing of psalms, or none to any purpose.

Is it thus with any of your families? My brethren, *these things ought not to be so*. It is not enough that you do that which is good, but you must do it well. God and religion have in effect no place in your hearts or houses, if they have not the innermost and the uppermost place. Christ will come no whither to be an underling; he is not a guest to be set behind the door. What comfort, what benefit can you promise to yourselves from such trifling services as these; from an empty *form of godliness* without *the power* of it? I beseech you, Sirs, make a business of your Family-Religion, and not a by-business. Let it be your pleasure and delight, and not a task and drudgery. Contrive your affairs so as that the most convenient time may be allotted both morning and evening for your family-worship, so as that you may not be unfit for it, or disturbed or straitened in it. Herein *wisdom is profitable to direct*. Address yourselves to it with reverence and seriousness, and a solemn pause; that

those who join with you may see and say, that *God is with you of a truth*, and may be struck thereby into a like holy awe. You need not be long in the service, but you ought to be lively in it; *not slothful in this business*, because it is business for God and your souls, *but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*.

4. Let those that have a church in their house, be very careful to adorn and beautify it in their conversation.

If you pray in your families, and read the scriptures, and sing psalms, and yet are passionate and froward with your relations, quarrelsome and contentious with your neighbours, unjust and deceitful in your dealings, intemperate and given to tippeling; or if you allow yourselves in any other sinful way, you pull down with one hand what you build up with the others. Your *prayers* will be an *abomination to God*, and to good men too, if they be thus polluted. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked*. See that you be universal in your religion, that it may appear you are sincere in it. Shew that you believe a reality in it, by acting always under the commanding power and influence of it. Be not Christians upon your knees, and Jews in your shops. While you seem saints in your devotions, prove not yourselves sinners in your conversations. Having begun the day in the fear of God, be in that *fear all the day long*. Let the example you set your families be throughout good, and by it teach them not only to read and pray, for that is but half their work, but by it teach them to be meek and humble, sober and temperate, loving and peaceable, just and honest; so shall you adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour; and those that will not be won by the word, shall be won by your conversation. Your Family-Worship is an honour

to you, see to it that neither you nor yours be in any thing a disgrace to it.

5. Let those that are setting out in the world set up a church in their house at first, and not defer it.

Plead not youth and bashfulness. If you have courage enough to rule a family, I hope you have courage enough to pray with a family. Say not, *the time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built*, as they did that dwelt in their cieled houses, while God's house lay waste, *Hag. 1. 2, 4.* It ought to be built presently; and the longer you put it off, the more difficulty there will be in the doing of it, and the more danger that it will never be done. Now you are beginning the world (as you call it) is it not your wisdom as well as duty to begin with God? Can you begin better? Or can you expect to prosper if you do not begin thus? The fuller your heads are of care about setting up house, and setting up shop, and settling in both, the more need you have of daily prayer, that by it you may *cast your care on God*, and fetch in wisdom and direction from on high.

6. In all your removes be sure you take the church in your house along with you.

Abraham oft removed his tent, but wherever he pitched it, the first thing he did was to build an altar. It is observable concerning *Aquila* and *Priscilla*, of whose pious family my text speaks, that when *Paul* wrote his epistle to the *Romans* they were at *Rome*; for he sends salutation to them thither, and there it is said they had a Church in their House, *Rom. 16. 5.* But now when he wrote this epistle to the *Corinthians* they were at *Ephesus*, (for thence it should seem this epistle bore date,) and here he sends salutations from them; and at *Ephesus* also they had a Church in their House. As wherever we go ourselves we must take our religion with us; so wherever we take our families, or part
of

of them, we must take our Family-Religion with us; for in all places we need divine protection, and experience divine goodness. *I will therefore that men pray every where.*

When you are in your city-houses, let not the business of them crowd out your Family-Religion; nor let the diversions of your country houses indispose your minds to these serious exercises. That care and that pleasure are unseasonable and inordinate, which leave you not both heart and time to attend the service of the Church in your House*. Let me here be an advocate also for those families whose masters are often absent from them, for their health or pleasure, especially on the Lord's day, or long absent upon business. Let me beg these absent masters to consider, *with whom they leave those few sheep in the wilderness*, (1 Sam. 17. 28.) and whether they do not leave them neglected and exposed. Perhaps there is not a just cause for being absent so much, nor can you give a good answer to that question, *What dost thou here Elijah?* But if there be a just cause, you ought to take care that the Church in your House be not neglected when you are abroad, but that the work be done when you are not at home to do it.

7. Let inferior relations help to promote religion in the families where they are.

If family-worship be not kept up in the houses where you live, let so much the more be done in your closets for God and your souls. If it be, yet think not that will excuse you from secret

* This would be a sufficient argument, if it were the only one, against frequenting publick places of diversion, even those of the most polite and innocent kind. Had professors of godliness, in the author's time, been so much *conformed to the world* as to spend their evening and midnight hours as they are now too often spent, he would certainly have entered his warmest protest.

worship. All is little enough to keep up the life of religion in your hearts, and help you forwards towards heaven. Let the children of praying parents, and the servants of praying masters, account it a great privilege to live in houses that have churches in them, and be careful to improve that privilege. Be you also *ready to every good work*. Make the religious exercises of your family easy and pleasant to those that perform them, by shewing yourselves forward to attend on them, and careful to attend to them; for your backwardness and mindlessness, will be their greatest discouragement. Let your lives also be a credit to good education, and make it appear to all with whom you converse, that you are every way the better for living in religious families.

8. Let solitary people that are not *set in families*, have churches in their chambers, and in their closets. When every man repaired the wall of *Jerusalem over against his own house*, we read of one that repaired *over against his chamber*, Neh. 3. 30. Those that live alone out of the way of Family-Worship, ought to take so much the more time for their secret worship, and, if possible, add the more solemnity to it. You that have not families to read the scriptures to, read them so much the more to yourselves. You have not children and servants to catechize, nor parents or masters to be catechized by; catechize yourselves then, that you may *hold fast the form of sound words*, which you have received. *Exhort one another*; so we read it, Heb. 3. 13. *παρακαλεῖτε ἑαυτοὺς*, it might as well be read, exhort yourselves. You are not made *keepers of the vineyards*, and therefore the greater is your shame if *your own vineyard you do not keep*. When you are alone, yet you are not alone, for the *Father is with you*, to observe what you do, and to own and accept you, if you do well.

9. Let

9. Let those that are to chuse a settlement consult the welfare of their souls in the choice.

If a Church in the House be so necessary, so comfortable, then *be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers*, who will have no kindness for the Church in the House, nor assist in the support of it, but instead of building this house, *pluck it down with their hands*, Prov. 14. 1. Let apprenticeships and other services be chosen by this rule, that that is best for us which is best for our souls; and therefore it is our interest to *go with those*, and be with those, *with whom God is*, Zech. 8. 23. When Lot was to chuse a habitation, he was determined therein purely by secular advantages, Gen. 13. 11, 13. and God justly corrected his sensual choice, for he never had a quiet day in the Sodom he chose, till he was fired out of it. The Jewish writers tell of one of their devout rabbins, who being courted to dwell in a place which was otherwise well accommodated, but had no synagogue near, he utterly refused to accept the invitation, and gave that text for his reason, Psal. 119. 72. *The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver.*

10. Let religious families keep up friendship and fellowship with each other, and as they have opportunity assist one another in doing good.

The communion of churches hath always been accounted their beauty, strength, and comfort, and so is the communion of these domestick churches. We find here, and in other of Paul's epistles, kind salutations sent to and from the houses that had churches in them. Religious families should *greet one another*, visit one another, love one another, pray for one another, and as becomes *households of faith*, do all the good they can to one another; forasmuch as they all meet daily at the same throne of grace, and hope to meet shortly
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at the same throne of glory, to be no more, as they are now, *divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel.*

Lastly, Let those houses that have churches in them, and flourishing churches, have comfort in them.

Is religion in the power of it uppermost in your houses? and are you and yours serving the Lord daily? Go on and prosper, for *the Lord is with you, while you be with him.* See your houses under the protection and blessing of heaven, and be assured that *all things shall work together for good to you.* Make it to appear by your holy chearfulness that you find God a good master, Wisdom's *ways pleasantness, and her paths peace*; and that you see no reason to envy those that spend their days in carnal mirth, for you are acquainted with better pleasures than any they can pretend to. Are your houses on earth God's houses? Are they dedicated to him, and employed for him? Be of good comfort; his house in heaven shall be yours shortly: *In my Father's house there are many mansions*; and one you may be sure for each of you, who *by a patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour and immortality.*

S E R M O N II.

Christ's Favour to little Children, opened
and improved *.

MARK X. 16.

*And he took them up in his arms, put his hands
upon them, and blessed them.*

APPPLICATION was made to our Lord Jesus, when he was here upon earth, on a great variety of occasions. Some we find imploring his favour upon one account, and some upon another; some for themselves, and some for their relations; some for the body, and some for the soul. Thus was fulfilled the prediction of the dying patriarch concerning *Shiloh*, Gen. 49. 10. that *to him shall the gathering of the people be*: and be it observed for the encouragement of all that humbly and in faith apply themselves to him, of the multitudes that spread their complaints before him, he never sent any away from him, ashamed of their hope in him: he gave them all an answer of peace, and they had what they came for.

But here in this paragraph, of which my text is the close, we have application made to Christ, upon

* Preached at the public baptizing of a child in London, March 6, 1713.

an errand different from any other, but such a one as those that know the heart of a parent, of a christian parent, will be glad to be encouraged and directed to come to him upon, and will therefore bless God that it is here upon record. There were those that brought *young children to him, that he should touch them*, ver. 13. In *Matthew's* gospel it is said, they desired *that he would put his hands upon them, and pray*, Matt. 19. 13.

Who they were that brought these children, we are not told, whether their parents or no. It is most likely they were, for who should shew so much concern for them as they? Nor are we told what number of children were brought, nor whether they were all of one family, nor just of what age; but as to that, *Luke* tells us, 18. 15. they were infants, τὰ Βρέφη. It is the word which in the story of Christ's birth we translate *the babe*, in swaddling clothes, and in the manger, *Luke* 2, 12. 26. and it is put for new born babes that desire the breast. The criticks say it signifies a child at nurse. They are said to be *brought* to Christ, which intimates, that they could not go themselves; and it is plain they were very little, for he *took them up in his arms*.

Christ came to teach, and heal, and bless; to teach a world that sat in darkness, to heal a world that was sick and dying, and to bless a world that lay under the curse.

Now (1.) These children were not brought to Christ to be *taught*, for they were not yet capable of receiving instruction, nor could they profit by his preaching, or put any questions to him. Those who are grown up to years of understanding, have need to be busy in getting knowledge now, that they may redeem the time they lost, thro' the invincible incapacities of their infancy.

Nor

Nor (2.) Were they brought to Christ to be cured, for it doth not appear that they needed it. Little children are indeed liable to many distempers, painful, mortal ones. Death and its harbingers reign even over them that have not sinned *after the similitude of Adam's transgression*, Rom. 5. 14. but these children were strong and healthful, and we do not find that any thing ailed them.

But (3.) They were brought to Christ to be *blest*: so they meant when they desired that he would *touch them*. The sign is put for the thing signified. The laying on of hands, was a ceremony anciently used in blessing. When *Joseph* brought his two sons to *Israel*, and put one to his left hand, and the other to his right, that he might touch them, that which he desired was that he would *blest them*, Gen. 48. 13. So these here brought their children to Christ, that he might touch and blest them, with the *saving strength of his right hand*. They looked upon Christ as a great prophet, as that prophet which should come into the world, Gen. 20. 7. as one that had a great interest in heaven, and consequently a great influence upon this earth. Now if he be *a prophet*, he shall *pray for thee*; but then thou must pay him so much respect as to desire his prayers. This honour they here give to Christ (as it is fit those should do; that expect to receive favour from him) in their humble request, that he would lift up a prayer for their children, which they believe will avail much, as the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man doth, James 5. 16.

It is good to have an interest in the prayers of those that are of the spiritual seed of *Jacob*, and to improve that interest for ourselves and our children. We should not only pray with and for our families ourselves, but engage the prayers of our friends for them. A treasury of prayers laid up for our children,

dren, may stand them in better stead than *thousands of gold and silver*.

Now the text tells us how well they sped, who brought their little children to Christ to be blessed, and prayed for. And it is recorded by three of the Evangelists, because it was a manifest indication of the design of Christ, to continue to the children of believers under the New Testament dispensation, the same covenant right, and visible church-membership, which they had under the Old Testament dispensation, by virtue of God's promise to *Abraham* and his seed, that blessing of *Abraham*, which comes upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, *Gal. 3. 14.* and because it gives us great encouragement when we come to Christ ourselves, to bring our children with us, and present them also to him.

They that brought these infants to Christ, were frowned upon and discountenanced by the disciples. They *rebuked them*, because they would not have such a needless trouble (so they thought it) given to their master, who had other work enough upon his hands. Was it not enough that he cured the sick, which none but he could do, but he must bless the well too, which others might do? How well is it for us, that our master has more tenderness and compassion than the best of his ministers have, and is touched more nearly than they are or can be, with the feeling of our infirmities, and an inclination to gratify those innocent desires, of humble and believing supplicants, which those that think themselves polite and refined, look upon with a slight as not worth taking notice of. In grace and goodness he is God and not man. Nay, he is both God and man. As man, he has himself *suffered being tempted*, and is therefore *able* with the greater sympathy, to *succour them that are tempted*;

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and

and as God in doing good, his thoughts and ways are infinitely above the best of ours.

As when God promised to shew *Moses* his glory he proclaimed all his *Goodness*, and caused that to *pass before him*; so our Lord Jesus, when he would let his chosen ones see his glory, the glory *as of the only begotten of the Father*, he shewed himself upon all occasions *full of grace*. Among men it is looked upon to be the symptom of a sweet and loving disposition, to take notice of little children, and to be familiar with them. By this, among many other instances, our Lord Jesus shewed himself to be kind and benign, meek and lowly in heart; that upon all occasions he discovered a particular kindness for little children, and never more than upon this occasion, when he gave a severe reprimand to his disciples for prohibiting those that brought their children to him. He was much displeased at it, (*ἠγανάκτησε.*) He was both sorry and angry that his own disciples did not better know his mind, and that they should be adversaries to those for whom they ought to have been advocates. And he gave orders immediately that they should be called to him, who brought the children (who, perhaps, upon the disciples check, were going off) and that room should be made for them to come to him. “By all means *suffer the little children to come to me, and do not forbid them*, for they belong to the church still as much as ever. The kingdom of God which I come to set up includes them; they are within the allegiance of Messiah the prince, and he will own them as his subjects.” And not only for the satisfaction of those that brought them, but for the benefit and advantage of the children, he *took them up*, with a great deal of endearing tenderness, *in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them*; did not only pray for a blessing, as they desired, but commanded the

the blessing, as one having authority, even life for evermore, which is inclusive of all blessings.

But what encouragement (you will say) doth this give to us? Christ is not now among us as he was then, and we cannot either make such addresses to him, or receive such favours from him as they then might. It is true we cannot in such a sensible manner, but we may as really in a spiritual way make our applications to him, and expect communications from him; for in him all fulness dwells, to him *all judgment is committed*, and the knee of every suppliant must bow to him: and we are sure he hath blessings as much at command now as ever he had: And therefore from the kind entertainment he gave to these children that were brought to him, we are warranted to infer his readiness to receive our children that are offered up to him.

From hence observe, that our Lord Jesus hath given us great encouragement to hope, that he will favourably accept our little children, when in a right manner we bring them to him for a blessing.

I. I shall endeavour to shew, how we must now bring our little children to Christ.

II. What entertainment we may promise ourselves they shall find with him, according to this instance in the text. And then make application.

I. Those that are truly ambitious of this honour for their children, and covetous of this wealth for them, to have them blessed of Christ, cannot but wish to know, how they may bring their children to him, so as that they may hope to obtain his favour. *Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven,* where Christ sits at God's right hand, and take my children with him thither to receive his blessing: no, the word of God is nigh to thee, and Christ in the word, and his blessings, to be received by faith, applying the word to ourselves. The tabernacle

nacle of God is among us, the priests, the spiritual sacrifices, the *Israel* of God. Where *two or three* of them are gathered in his name, he will be in the midst of them, *Matt. 18. 20.* both to receive their homage, and to give out his favours. Where his ordinances are administered according to his institution, and those things which he has commanded, observed and taught; there will he be always, even to the end of the world; there he records his name, and there will meet his people, and bless them. Nay, where-ever a true christian is, there is a living temple, in which God is served and honoured, and his blessings and favours communicated by his Spirit dwelling in the heart. There is still a way of access to Christ, a *new and living way*, by which we may not only come to Christ ourselves, but bring others to him, bring ours to him, our children, that are pieces of ourselves.

Four ways we must bring our children to Christ.

1. By surrendering them to him.

When by a deliberate and solemn act of our souls we resign and give up, with ourselves, the *children* also which God has graciously given us, to the Lord Jesus, to be to him *for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory*, to be christians, devoted to his honour, and employed in his service; to be members of that body whereof he is the head; servants in that family whereof he is the master; and subjects in that kingdom of his among men, which is incorporated by that great gospel charter, *Disciple all nations into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, *Matt. 28. 19.* then we bring our children to Christ: we present them to him (a poor present to him who has a world of angels at command, yet such as he requires and will accept of) as *living sacrifices*, which we desire may be *holy and acceptable*, for it is *our reasonable service*, *Rom. 12. 1.*

Parents

Parents are invested by nature in a right to their children, and an authority over them for their good. A daughter in her father's house, was accounted by the law not *sui juris*, he could disannul her vows. Now this right in our children we must not only acknowledge to be subordinate to that *prior superior* title God has to them; (for we are only the fathers of their flesh, he is the father of their spirits.) But we must also transfer to our Lord Jesus, whom the Father has constituted the great trustee both of all the powers with which he intended mankind should be ruled, and of all the favours with which he intended mankind should be blessed. Our children are God's children; they are my sons, and my daughters, saith God, which thou hast borne unto me, *Ezek. 16. 20.* and therefore it is sacrilege to alienate them from him, and to devote them to the service of the world, and the flesh; it is prophaning the holy things of the Lord our God: and it is our duty to dedicate them, and dispose of them as he directs. Now he directs us to give them up to Christ, to enroll them among his disciples, to enter their names among his servants, who being born in his house, belong to his family, and are entitled to the protection and provisions of it, and taken under the order and discipline of it.

That is a great word, and speaks much of the dignity and power of our Lord Jesus, *John 3. 35.* *The father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand;* all the things that concern his honour and government, all his part of the matters in variance between himself and fallen man, he has put into the hands of the Mediator, as referee of the controversy, the blessed *day's-man*, that hath *laid his hand upon us both.* Now that which he requires of us (and with good reason) is, that *we* love the Son, and give all things into his hand; all our

interests and concerns, and particularly our children, who were made and born for immortality : who are entered into a state of probation and preparation for eternity, whom therefore we commit to him as to their guardian, by whose gospel, *life and immortality are brought to light.*

Hereby we do honour to the exalted Redeemer, and recognize his authority, as one to whom the Father has therefore given power over all flesh, especially over the spirits of all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as he had given him, *John* 17. 2. We own his dominion both in heaven and on earth, by owning his indisputable title to our children ; both to their bodies, by which they are allied to the earth ; and to their souls, by which they are allied to heaven and the world of spirits. Hereby we confess, that as we ourselves, so our children are more his than our own, and therefore we desire that both we and ours may live to him. And in thus *honouring the Son we honour the Father also*, for Christ came to bring us to himself, that he might *bring us to God* : our children are therefore brought to Christ, the mediator of the covenant, that through him they may be brought to God, as their God in covenant. When *Israel* was taken into covenant with God, express notice is taken not only of their captains, and elders, and officers, but of their little ones, as parties to the covenant which the Lord their God made with them, *Deut.* 29. 10, 11, 12. Hereby we do well for our children ; the best we can do ; for we give them up to him who is able to do that for them which we cannot do, and which must be done for them, or they are undone. We know they derive through our loins sinful and corrupt natures ; we know they are shapen in iniquity. They are called, *Isa.* 48. 8. *Transgressors from the womb* ; what therefore can we do for them, but bring them to him that came to save sinners, to save them from their sins ? They are born polluted, and by
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presenting

presenting them to Christ, we bring them to the fountain that was opened for *Judah* and *Jerusalem* to wash in from *sin*, which is *uncleanness*, *Zech. 13. 1.* They are born distempered, and we thus bring them to the great physician to be cured, to have their very constitution altered; that *as they have borne the image of the earthly, they may also bear the image of the heavenly*, *1. Cor. 15. 49.*

Now this solemn surrender of our children to God, as theirs in covenant, if we ourselves be in covenant with God, I think ought to be done by the ordinance of *Baptism*, an ordinance peculiar to the Redeemer's kingdom, and a seal, as circumcision was, of the righteousness which is by faith, *Rom. 4. 11.* and therefore, like it, belonging both to believers, and to their infant-seed. Our Saviour, when he instituted that ordinance, gave a double intimation concerning his gospel-kingdom which was then to be set up. One was, that it must not be confined to the *Jews*, but spread to the *Gentiles*; therefore go and *make all nations disciples*: the other was, that it should not be confined to that generation, and live and die with the apostles. It must not be (as the historian saith of the *Roman* commonwealth) *res unius ætatis*, a thing of one age: no, it must continue, for Christ will continue at the head of it, and in the midst of it *always, even to the end of the world.* Now as baptism did subserve the former design, and attended the progress of the gospel to the most distant regions of the earth, so we have reason to think it was instituted equally to subserve the latter design, and to attend the propagating of the gospel to the latest ages of time, that by taking early hold of the seed of the faithful, and giving their parents, and ministers, and consciences, early hold of them, provision might be made (as was by the altar Ed) that nothing might make them *cease from fearing the Lord*, *Josh. 22. 25.* That thus a seed might serve

the Lord Jesus, which should be accounted to him for a generation, *Psal.* 22. 29, 30. And by keeping up the entail, and as it were by a continual claim, the name of Christ might endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven, *Psal.* 89. 28.

But waving this dispute, I insist upon that in which I am sure we are all agreed, that our children are to be given up to the Lord Jesus; and *of his own do we give him*, for he hath *bought them with a price*, that they may glorify him in body and spirit, and he may be honoured even by their *Hosanna's*. We lend them to the Lord as *Hannah* did *Samuel*, that they may be his all the days of their life, and if they be so, they shall be his to the endless ages of eternity.

2. We must bring them to Christ, by seeking to him for them, as those that are surrendered to him.

They are to be but once baptized, but they are to be daily prayed for, and the promise sealed to them in their baptism put in suit and pleaded with God in their behalf. These here brought their children to Christ, when they begged his blessing on them, and thus we must bring ours to him; bring their case to him, the case of their precious souls, which ought to be laid nearer our hearts than any thing else that concerns them. When Christ was here upon earth, we read of many that applied themselves to him for mercy for their children. *Lord have mercy upon my son*, saith one; *Lord have mercy upon my daughter*, saith another; and the children fared the better for the faith and prayers of the parents: and we may as easily come to him now he is in heaven, and more easily; and with the same petition: *Lord have mercy on my son, on my daughter that is foolish, and vain, and carnally minded, which is death, and much under the power of Satan*. Even our little childrens souls are to be prayed for; for we believe they are born in sin, and fool-

foolishness is bound in their hearts : and we see how soon corrupt nature appears and works in them, and how the tares spring up with the wheat. Let us therefore be earnest with God for the operation of his grace upon their hearts betimes ; that *Christ be formed* in their souls when they are young, and they may be sanctified from their infancy. *They are thine, save them.* *Ishmael* was very young when *Abraham* prayed so affectionately, O that *Ishmael might live before thee !*

Our children are capable of being prayed for, and of receiving benefit by prayer before they are capable of being taught, and of receiving benefit by instruction. And as their being baptized lays us under an engagement to teach them, so it gives us an encouragement to pray for them, and we should begin early to do it. Look up to Christ, and beg of him to *bless them* with all *spiritual blessings in heavenly things*, which will be the best provision, and the best portion for them.

Be constant in praying for your children ; pray for them as duly as for yourselves ; as *St. Paul* for his friends, making mention of them *always in every prayer*. Be particular in praying for them ; pray for each particular child, as holy *Job* offered burnt-offerings for his sons, *according to the number of them all* ; that you may be able to say as *Hannah*, *1 Sam. i. 27.* " For this child I prayed." Pray for particular blessings for your children, according as you see their case requires, for that grace which you observe their natural temper (or distemper rather) calls for. Let us take heed lest our prayers degenerate into forms, and we pray for them only for custom, and by rote ; but let us pray for them from a principle of concern for their precious souls, in the prosperity and welfare of which their happiness, and our comfort in them, is bound up. When a child is born, there is a candle lighted that must burn to eternity, either in heaven or hell, the consideration whereof should awaken

awaken us to pray with all possible earnestness for the salvation of their souls, next to that of our own. When they are little, they cannot pray for themselves, and if you do not pray for them, who should? When they are grown up, it may be they are careless, and will not pray for themselves to any purpose, and then their case is the more piteous. It may be they are wicked and profane, and hate prayer, yet continue to pray for them, for while there is life, there is hope, and while there is hope, there is room for prayer, and who knows but he who waits to be gracious, may at length be gracious to you, and your child that is dead, may be alive again. Have an eye to Christ in all your prayers for your children, let the prayer be directed to him, as it was here. It was in his name particularly that they were baptized, and therefore in his name they must be prayed for, and into his hands all our petitions to God must be put. We may with him plead their baptism, "Lord, they are given up to thee
 " to be thine, make them thine own, then own
 " them as thine." Plead his interest in them as the children of his family, the lambs of his flock. Plead your dedication of them to him, and his acceptance of them, and resolve to leave them with him. It is by prayer that we cast our care upon God, cast it upon the Lord Jesus, to whom the Father has *committed all judgment*, and who is entrusted with the administration of the providential kingdom, in subserviency to the mediatorial kingdom. Our children are a considerable part of our care, what they will prove, and what will become of them; we must, by prayer, cast this care upon Christ, and believe that the children of the greatest are not above the need of his care, nor those of the meanest beneath the cognizance of it.

3. We must bring them to Christ, by submitting them to the disposal of his providence.

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When we have by prayer fought to him for them, we must by a chearful acquiescence in his wisdom and goodness, make ourselves easy concerning them; believing, that Christ knows what is fit for them and us, better than we do. We bring them to Christ, when we bring our will, concerning them, into an entire submission to his will, believing that he will be sanctified, and resolving that then we will be satisfied. Let us make Christ guardian to our children, not only when we are dead, but while we live; trust them with him, and put them under his protection; as *Jacob* did his children when he was parting with them, God Almighty give you mercy! *Gen.* 43. 14. And when he was parting from them, The angel that redeemed me from all evil (and that can be no other than the Lord Jesus, the angel of the covenant) bless the lads! *Gen.* 48. 16.

When we can refer it to the divine will, whether our children shall be healthful or sickly, high or low, rich or poor, prosperous or crossed, thriving or declining in the world; whether they shall live to be old, or die young, provided it may but go well with their precious souls, and they may be happy to eternity, then we bring them to Christ, as a skilful, faithful physician, willing he should take what method he pleases with them, so he will but cure them, and save them. I have read of a good man, whose son being disposed of in the world, met with great affliction, which he once very feelingly complained of to his good father, who answered (according to the principle I am now upon) “any thing child, to bring thee to heaven.”

4. We must bring them to Christ, by subjecting them, as far as we can, to the government of his grace.

Having laid their necks under the yoke of Christ, in their baptism, we must teach them to draw in it, and use our interest in them, and authority over them,

them, to keep them under that easy yoke; and *bring them up in the nurture and admonition of our Lord Jesus*, Eph. 6. 4. Having got them enrolled among his servants, we must teach them betimes to know their master, and to own his dominion over them, and their obligations to him; bring them into their master's presence, bring them to see him, bring them to hear him, by bringing them to his word and ordinances. *Feed your kids beside the shepherds tents*; let them have family instruction, as soon as they are capable of receiving that, and be brought to sit under the publick ministry, as soon as they are capable of not being a disturbance to it. Bring them to Christ's feet, by taking pains to impress upon their minds the indispensable necessity of their being taught and ruled by Jesus Christ, of their believing his truths, and obeying his laws, in order to their present and eternal welfare. We brought them to Christ, by an instituted sign of their being his in their baptism; we bring them to Christ, by the instituted means of their being his, in their religious education; both those we second with prayer, that they may be his. Thus far we must go, and further we cannot. Thus you see how you may bring your little children to Christ.

II. I come next to shew you for your encouragement, how you may hope he will receive those that are thus brought to him, and what entertainment they may expect; surely something like the kind entertainment he here gave to these little ones, *he took them up in his arms, put his hand upon them, and blessed them*. Such visible, sensible signs of his favour we are not now to expect, but that which is more than equivalent in spiritual blessings.

Only let me premise, that we cannot be so confident of God's giving his grace to our children, tho' we in sincerity pray to him for it, and use the means, as we may be of his giving it to ourselves, if we do

do so. Many a godly parent no doubt has brought his children to Christ, as before directed, who yet have proved wicked and vile, and strangers to Christ, and come short of his blessing; but it has been through their own default. Many are sacramentally regenerated, and *born again of water*, by which they have been partakers of the christian name, who yet are never really regenerated and *born again of the spirit*, but live and die destitute of the nature of christians. All we can say is, that if we thus bring our children to Christ, they stand much fairer for, and nearer to his blessing, than if they be not brought to him. There are promises and precedents which we may take encouragements from, and upon which we are caused to hope, that Christ will give them his grace, will work his good work in them, both as a token of, and as a qualification for his good-will towards them. And if we do, it will be an addition to our comfort, that it is an answer to our prayers, and the fruit of our labours; if he doth not, it will be a support to us under our grief, to have the testimony of our conscience, that by the grace of God, we have in some measure done our duty, and then left the event with God, whose grace is his own.

Let us now observe the instance of Christ's favour to these children, and enquire what we may expect that hath some resemblance of it.

First, He took them up in his arms.

See how Christ doth more, for humble believing supplicants, *than they can ask or think*: it was only desired he would *touch* them, but he did more, he *embraced* them; and it speaks not only his wonderful condescension, but his compassion and affection. A little while ago, when he had occasion to set a little child before his disciples as a pattern of humility, *Mark 9. 36.* he not only set the child in the midst of them, which was sufficient to answer his intention,

tion, but he took him in his arms, to shew his tender love to those that are as little children. *When Israel was a child then I loved him, Hos. 11. 1.* This spake the kindness our Saviour had for the human nature and race; his φιλανθρωπια his joy in the habitable part of the earth, and his delight in the sons of men.

Christ took up these children in his arms as one well pleased with them, and concerned for them, that the scripture might be fulfilled which said concerning him, *Isa. 40. 11.* He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather his lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom. Time was when he himself was taken up in old Simeon's arms: and he did himself pass through the age of infancy, to make it honourable and comfortable to the children of his people; and the expressions of his favour afterwards to little children, make it much more so. When their mothers and nurses carry them in their arms, and are almost tired with the load, let them refresh themselves with this thought, that the holy child Jesus was carried in arms, and did himself take up little children in his arms. When Moses was charged thus to bear Israel, he found himself aggrieved, *Num. 11. 12.* *Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them, that thou shouldst say unto me, carry them in thy bosom as a nursing father bears the sucking child:* but what Moses complained of, Christ had complacency in; he took them up in his arms, (ἐναγκαλιζόμεν) he in-armed them, he took them into his embraces.

But how may we hope he will take our children in his arms, when we bring them to him? Surely we may promise ourselves no less than what David promised himself, *Psal. 27. 10.* *When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.* We may hope,

1. That he will take them up in the arms of his power, and providence; that he will hold their souls in

in life, and protect them from, or carry them through, the weaknesse and perils of the infant-age; that he will give *his angels*, the *little ones angels*, a charge concerning them, to bear them in *their arms*; Pſal. 91. 12. and their arms are his arms, the arms of his power. *The name of the Lord is a strong tower*, into which the righteous are not only welcome to run themselves, but to bring their children, and where they and theirs may hope to be safe: so safe, as that no real evil shall befall them. The arm of the Lord is revealed in favour of the little ones, even of a sinful race, witness those of unbelieving murmuring *Israel*, Num. 14. 31. *But your little ones*, tho' living in a barren wilderness, and likely to be made a prey, *them will I bring into that land which I have promised, and you have despised*. Much more shall it be stretched out for the relief and preservation of the faithful seed, whose *refuge the eternal God is*, and will be, *and underneath them are the everlasting arms*, Deut. 33. 27. such are the arms of the Lord Jesus, which cannot faint or be weary, and by which all things are upheld.

That Divine Providence which supports children in their childhood, and carries them through that helpless age, which puts it into the hearts of parents to provide for them, which preserves to them their limbs and senses, of which they might, by a thousand ill accidents, be deprived in a moment; by which they grow in strength and stature, is to be mentioned to the honour of the Redeemer, to whom it is owing that the race of mankind continues in being upon the face of the earth, tho' guilty and obnoxious. It is in the Redeemer's arms, *by whom all things consist*, that children are borne up, and carried on to full age; for to him are owing all the reprieves of God's patience, and all the gifts of his common providence. This we have all experienced ourselves, and must acknowledge it with thankfulness to the Redeemer's

Redeemer's praise, as the royal Psalmist doth, *Thou art he that took me out of the womb; thou didst make me hope, and didst keep me in safety when I was upon my mother's breast: I was cast upon thee from the womb,—by thee have I been holden up—and therefore my praise shall be continually of thee,* Psal. 22. 9, 10. 71. 5, 6.

And what we have experienced ourselves, we may humbly expect for our children, if we bring them to Christ, to whom we have brought ourselves.

2. We may hope that he will take them up in the arms of his pity and grace; that he will, in compassion to their precious souls, the case of which by nature is very piteous, undertake to cleanse and cure them; to sanctify and save them; that as in his love and pity he hath shed his blood to wash from sin, and so prepared the laver, he will in love to them, and pity to them, sprinkle that purifying healing blood upon them, that they may by it be washed from their sin, and sanctified for God, as their God. The loveliest sweetest babe we ever saw, tho' like *Moses* in the ark of bullrushes, *exceeding fair*, to admiration, yet like him, is born in a *land of Ægypt*, in a *house of bondage*; like him marked for the sword as soon as born; nay, it is like the infant in *Ezekiel's* parable, polluted in its own blood, and cast out to the loathing of its person: it is *shapen in iniquity*, it is *born in sin*, and its precious soul is defiled and deformed, and an object of pity. It is a melancholy thought, and a damp to the pleasure we take in our children: but this is a comfort, that Christ has compassion on them, has *arms to gather them up in*, and has given us hopes that he *will say unto them live, yea, he will say unto them live*, Ezek. 16. 5, 6; will wash them from their filth, will cloath them with his grace, and *the time* will be a *time of love* indeed, both to them and us. That he will embrace them as the father of the prodigal did his returning son, when he *fell on his neck and kissed him*,
will

will receive them into the arms of a covenant of grace, out of which they shall never be plucked, and in which they shall be for ever easy and happy.

P A R T II.

We now proceed to observe, *Secondly*, That our blessed Lord *put his hands upon* these infants. They that brought them desired he would *touch them*; one touch from Christ has done wonders; but he did more, he *put his hands on them*, as he did on *John* when he said, *fear not*, Rev. i. 17. and as he did on many whom he cured; to intimate that virtue went out of him, for the purpose to which he intended it. But how may we hope that Jesus Christ will now put his hand upon us and ours?

1. If he set us and ours apart for himself, as his own peculiar people, as the buyer lays his hand on the goods he has agreed for, they are now his own. As *Jacob* put his hand on the head of *Joseph's* sons, to signify not only his blessing them, but his adopting them, and taking them for his own, *let my name be named upon them*, Gen. 48. 16. This we hope Christ doth for our children when we bring them to him; he owns them for his, and we may say they do in some degree belong to Christ, are retainers to his family. It is an honour and comfort to have our little children called Christians, called by Christ's name, to have them numbered among his peculiar ones; among the servants born in his house, distinguished from the children of heathens, that have not the knowledge of God and Christ; to have them added to the church, which is God's treasure in the world, planted in his vineyard, sown in his field, to be a holy seed, a seed for God; especially if we have some good hopes thro' grace that they are not only admitted to a place in the

courts of God's house now, but are designed for his holy place above, for the congregation of the righteous there. If Christ will but put his hand upon them, and say, *They shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels*, we have enough, we have all we wished for in bringing them to him.

2. If he give his holy Spirit to us and ours, it may truly be said, he puts his hand upon us and them. The Spirit is sometimes called the finger of God, and sometimes the hand of God, *Luke 11. 20.* so that Christ's putting his hand upon us, not only puts us into a relation to him, but works a real change in us, lays hold on the soul for him, and puts his image, as well as superscription, upon it. The *laying on of hands* was a ceremony used in conferring the Holy Ghost, and this we pray for, and hope for from Christ, for our children, when we bring them to him. And there are words upon which he has encouraged us to hope for this. We find it possible that children may be *sanctified from their birth*, *Jer. 1. 5.* that they may be *filled with the Holy Ghost from their mother's womb*, *Luke 1. 15.* nay, we find it promised, *Isa. 44. 3.* that God will *pour his spirit upon our seed*, and *his blessing*, that blessing, that blessing of blessings *upon our off-spring*: that *his spirit upon thee shall not depart from thy seed*, *Isa. 59. 21.* That his spirit shall be *poured out* upon our *sons and daughters*, *Joel 2. 28.* The New Testament promise *is to us and to our children*, *Acts 2. 39, 39.* not only that of the *forgiveness of sins*, but that of the *gift of the Holy Ghost*. These are the true sayings of God, and we may put them in suit, and expect the performance of them for our children when we bring them to Christ; and O that he would thus put his hand upon them!

Thirdly, We are further told concerning these children that our Saviour *blessed them*: he was desired to pray for a blessing for them, but he did

more, he commanded the blessing, blessed with authority; he pronounced them blessed, and thereby made them so; for those whom he blesteth are blessed indeed. Christ is the great High-Priest, whose office it is to bless the people of God, and all theirs. When he parted from his disciples at his ascension, he blessed them; he left blessings behind him for his church on earth, and all the members of it, the little ones not excepted.

When God took *Abraham* into covenant, he promised to bless him, and the blessing wherewith he blessed him was, *I will be a God to thee and to thy seed*, Gen. 17. 7. But that was not all; he promised in the Messiah, who should descend from his loins, *all the nations of the earth should be blessed*, not only blessed by him, but blessed in him, Gen. 12. 2, 3. in that righteousness and salvation which should be wrought out, and brought in by him. The transferring of this blessing was the great care and business of the Patriarchs, *Jacob* and *Esau* strove for it, and *Jacob* got it. The *Jews* sinned it away for themselves, but not for the world, and therefore by the gospel this blessing of *Abraham* comes upon the *Gentiles*, Gal. 3. 14. that comprehensive blessing, that God will be a God to them that believe, and to their seed. This blessing Christ has the conferring of, for he is the Mediator of the covenant, and trustee of the blessings of it. Now if we in faith bring our children to him, as Mediator, we may hope he will bestow this blessing upon them with the other children of the church; for St. *Peter* gives the *Jews* this reason why *God* having raised up his son *Jesus*, sent him to bless them, because they were the children of the prophets, and of the covenant, Acts 3. 25, 26. Now if we and ours be children of the prophets and of the covenant; of the prophets, by our assent to gospel truths; and of the covenant, by our consent to gospel terms, we may hope to inherit (and our seed

after us) that blessing which Christ was sent to bestow.

The prayers made by the *Israel* of God for all its members, from the least to the greatest, are encouraging to us to hope that they shall share in the blessing. Our children are not only prayed for by us as parts of our family, but they are prayed for by all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ; *their Lord and ours*, 1 Cor. 1. 2. as belonging to Christ's family, to the nursery in that family; the welfare and prosperity of which, all that are concerned for the perpetuating of Christ's name and throne, cannot but have a particular and tender concern for. In bringing them to Christ, we bring them within the prayers of all good Christians, which we hope may obtain a blessing for them.

The promises made to the *Israel* of God are yet more encouraging; especially since Christ came to confirm the promises made to the fathers, that in him they might be *yea and amen*, Rom. 15. 8. Now it is promised, that *the generation of the upright shall be blessed*, Psal. 112. 2. that *the seed of God's servants shall be established before him*, Psal. 102. 28. That they shall be so remarkably pious and prosperous, that *all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord has blessed*, Isa. 6. 9. Lord, be it unto thy servants according to the word which thou hast spoken.

APPLICATION.

I. Let me from hence address myself to children, to little children, to the lambs of the flock, to the youngest that can hear with understanding. Will not you be glad to hear this, that the Lord Jesus Christ has a tender concern and affection for you, and that he has blessings in store for you, if you apply yourselves to him, according to your capacity?

capacity? Shall I speak to you in the words of *David*, *Pfal. 34. 11. Come, ye children, hearken to me, and I will teach you*, as young as you are, the fear of the Lord. Nay, I would teach you not only the fear of God, but the faith of Christ, and therefore address myself to you, in the words of *Paul*, *Gal. 4. 19. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you*, till his image be renewed upon you, and he live in you.

You hear, dear little ones, what Christ has done for you, what favour he hath shewed to those of your age; and will not you put in for an interest in his favour, and the provision he has made for the entertainment of children? Hath he thus loved you, and will not you love him? Has he such kind thoughts towards you, and will not you have dutiful thoughts towards him? Doth he invite you to him, and will not you accept of his invitation? He saith here, *suffer little children* not only to be brought to me, but *to come to me*, to come as they can themselves, to make it their own act and deed, and do not forbid them, for it is possible, that of those of their age may be of the kingdom of God, that they may get to heaven.

You love those that take notice of you, and play with you, and give you toys, and will you not love those that pray for you, and instruct you, and would bring you to be acquainted with the best things? Will you not reckon them your friends indeed, that seek the welfare of your souls, your eternal welfare?

Be sensible betimes of the corruption of your nature, that *foolishness is bound in your heart*, and give all diligence to get a change wrought in you. Begin betimes to put a difference between God's name and other names; God's book and other books; God's day and other days. Be dutiful to your parents, and labour to be a comfort to them. Love

prayer, learn to pray and be much in it. Mortify your passions, keep them under, and do not indulge them. Hate and abhor lying, and make conscience of speaking truth.

There are little books, both of counsels and examples, suited to your age, the *Token for Children* by Mr. Janeway, and Mr. *White's little Book for little Children*, which you should not be strangers to*. Love your catechism, and *hold fast the form of sound words*, which you have heard; but above all, see to it that from your childhood you *know the holy scriptures*, which are able to *make you wise to salvation*.

Lay yourselves at Christ's feet, and he will take you up in his arms: give yourselves to him, and he will give himself in his graces and comforts to you. Lie in his way, by a diligent attendance on his ordinances, and he will not pass by without putting his hand on you. And if you value his blessings aright, and be earnest with him for a blessing, he will bless you with the best of blessings, such as will make you eternally blessed.

II. This passage speaks both direction and encouragement to christian parents. *I write unto you fathers*, and unto you mothers, that have a tender concern for your children, and desire they may do well, and would fain do well for them, observe the entertainment Christ gave to the children that were brought to him, and see it *written* for your *learning*.

I. Let this *direct* us that are parents concerning our children. We have seen how we are to bring them to Christ, and have we thus brought them to him? We brought them to baptism, but did we

* To these may now be added several more: *viz.* Dr. *Watts's* Catechisms, Prayers, and Divine Songs; Dr. *Doddridge's* Easy Verses. A Sermon to Children; on Christ's regard to the Lambs of his flock, by S. P.

thereupon bring them to Christ? Was it done as unto the Lord? If it was, let us now make it to appear. Have we brought our children to Christ, with hopes that they have been accepted of him?

1.) Let us then still bring them to him by faith and prayer, according as their case requires. Be daily laying them at his feet, by resigning them to his conduct, and referring all events concerning them to his wise and gracious disposal. Be daily putting them in his arms, by intreating his favour towards them, as that which is the life of their souls, and better than the life of the body. You see here what to desire and pray for, for your children, that the Mediator's blessing may be their portion; for that is a portion for the soul and eternity, a *good part* that shall never be taken away from those that have it. Covet not great things in the world for them; a little will serve to bear their charges through it, but be earnest with God for blessings for them *in heavenly things by Christ Jesus*; let them have these, and they have enough. When you bless your children, (and it is good sometimes to do it solemnly) let your eye be to Christ, in whom alone it is that blessings are entailed on us, and ours; and thro' whose hand they are derived. The Patriarchs in blessing their sons had an eye to a Christ to come, and to him now he is come much more ought we to have an eye.

Pray daily with your children, and servants, that they may hear you pray for them, and may thereby be taught and quickened to pray for themselves. I hope none of you dare live in the neglect of family prayer, either morning or evening, when you know that instead of the blessing of Christ, the wrath and curse of God is poured out *on the families that call not on his name*, Jer. 10. 25. While you and your families live without prayer, you live without God; you make no joint-acknowledgment

of him, and can expect no joint-receiving from him. It may justly be feared that those who throw aside so necessary, so comfortable, so advantageous a duty as family prayer is, do not make conscience of secret prayer neither, but frequently omit that, or at least do not make a business of it, but suffer it to degenerate into a formality; and how can you expect daily blessings upon your children, if you do not daily ask for them? or to have an interest in the intercession which Jesus Christ is continually making for us in heaven, if you do not pray continually morning and evening, in the virtue of that intercession. Have you settled a correspondence between Christ and your families, by devoting your children to him in their baptism, and will you not keep up that correspondence? How can you expect the benefit of it, if you do not on your part keep it up?

You that have the charge of families, remember you are christians, and ought in that capacity to confess Christ, and to own and honour him *before your families*. There is such a general disuse of christian conference, that most are ashamed by that, to acknowledge Christ before their neighbours; but they cannot have that pretence to decline it before their own children and servants. If therefore *with the heart you believe unto righteousness*, think how necessary it is, that thus with the *mouth you make confession unto salvation*. Remember that your family is a family of christians, not a herd of negroes; I should say a herd of brute beasts, (for those that have charge of negroes, ought to pray for them, and to have them prayed with) and you look upon them as no better than brute beasts, if you do not pray with them; nay and worse, for the *ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib*, Isa. 1. 3. but you go not before them in acknowledging their great

great Owner, nor lead them to the footstool of their Master's throne of grace. But I hope better things of you.

Use the baptism of your children, as an argument with yourselves to pray with them, and then you may use it as a plea with God, for the mercies you ask of him for them. "Lord Jesus, "I have presented my children to thee, and thou "hast accepted them; I still present them to thee, "and wilt not thou still accept them? Thou "hast blessed them, wilt thou not say they shall "be blessed? and then they are blessed indeed."

2.) Let us then bring them up for him. Have we any good hope thro' grace, that Christ has owned our dedication of ours to him, has taken them up in his arms, put his hands on them, and blessed them, let us then receive each of them from him again, as it is given us, with the same charge that *Pharaoh's* daughter gave to *Moses's* mother, *Take this child, and nurse it for me.* You are to look upon your children as given up to Christ, and to manage them accordingly.

Has Christ shewed such a tender affection to your little children, be not you then hardened against them; do not rule them with rigour, *provoke them not to wrath*, lest they be discouraged, Eph. 6. 4. *Be gentle among them, for so the nurse cherisheth her children*, 1 Thel. 2. 7. Study to make your children love you, and then every thing you enjoin them will be easy. When you are angry at them, let it be for that only for which you know Christ would be angry at them, and that is for their sins, which must be restrained by the rod and reproof, not for their weaknesses and childish infirmities, which time will wear off. Has Christ blessed your children, and put honour upon them? Do not you curse them, and give them such scurrilous language as *Saul* gave to his son *Jonathan*,
1 Sam.

1 Sam. 20. 30. lest you teach them to give the like to their inferiors. *Bless, and curse not.*

Have you given up your children to Christ? bring them up then *in his nurture and admonition.* It is not enough that you pray with them and for them daily, but you must daily instruct them in the things of God, and in all those things that will be profitable to them. It is observable, that immediately after the laying down of that great truth, *That the Lord our God is one Lord,* and of that great law, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart,* Deut. 6. 4, 5, 6, 7. it follows as an indispensable duty, and a means of keeping up religion in the world, *Thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children.* And look upon it to be one of the most needful pieces of work thou hast to do; more needful to get the knowledge of God for them, than to get estates for them, nay than to get bread for them. Thou shalt therefore not only hear them their catechism once a week, but thou shalt talk freely and familiarly of the truths and laws of God among them, with all gravity and seriousness, *when thou sittest* with them in thine house, and *when thou walkest* with them *by the way,* at night *when thou liest down* read a portion of scripture to them, and oblige them to take notice of it, and again in the morning *when thou risest up,* that thus the word of Christ may *dwell in them richly.* You know they cannot learn Latin, but they must go to school every day; nor learn a trade, but must go to shop every day; and ought they not to have daily instructions out of the word of God, in order to their getting the knowledge of Christ, which is infinitely more excellent?

Take particular care to bring your children acquainted with Jesus Christ, the true treasure hid in the field of the scriptures, Christ and him crucified,

cified, Christ and him glorified. You call the baptizing of your children, the *christening* of them. I wish you would consider it, and think how little it will avail them to have been christened, if they do not learn Christ, if they be not taught the truth as it is in Jesus, *Eph. 4. 20, 21.* Let not your children rest in a mere natural religion; that is good, it is necessary, but it is not enough: you must make them sensible of their need of Christ, of their lost and undone condition without him; must endeavour to lead them into the mysteries of our reconciliation to God, and our redemption from sin and wrath by a Mediator; and O that they may experimentally *know him, and the power of his resurrection!*

In teaching children the knowledge of God, both the parents are concerned to do their part. *Solomon* speaks both of the *instruction of the father*, and the *law of the mother*, *Prov. 1. 8.* But when they are little, the mother hath a greater opportunity of instilling into them that which is good, and ought to improve it. *Timothy* got to know the holy scriptures from his childhood, by being brought up under a good *mother* and *grand-mother*, *2 Tim. 1. 5.* and king *Lemuel*, when he is come to the throne, forgets not the *prophecy that his mother taught him*, *Prov. 31. 1.*

And as in other accomplishments of your children, so in the business of religion, which is their best and true accomplishment, you must, as they come to be capable, put them on to advance. When they have gone thro' their learning, you put them into business; when they have served their apprenticeship, you set them up for themselves; and thus when you have brought them to some competent knowledge of Christ, and have some reason to hope, that the Spirit of grace has begun a good work in their souls, persuade them to
take

take the covenant of baptism upon themselves, in the use of the other seal, that of the Lord's Supper, and so by their own act and deed, to *join themselves to the Lord*. Tell them you brought them to Christ, when they were infants; you have been ever since shewing them the way to him, and now they must come themselves to him. Tho' they be weak, if they be willing, you may assure them they shall be welcome; for those that come unto him he will not in any wise cast them out, (*John 6. 37. & μή* a double negative.) If they sit down at his feet to hear his words, he will take them up in his arms and bless them.

There is one thing more in which I must be a monitor particularly, else I should not be a faithful monitor to parents, who have brought their children to Christ, and hope that he hath blessed them; and that is, that they be careful how they dispose of them in the world when they are grown up; lest by an error here, they undo all that they have been doing for them. In putting them apprentices, placing them in callings, and in marrying them, *Let Christ be consulted about it*; let the interests of the *better part* be consulted in it. That is best for them which is best for their *souls*, against which you should not be swayed by any worldly interests or regards whatsoever. If you have laid a good foundation, let it be your care and endeavour that it may be built upon.

2. Let this *encourage* us that are parents concerning our children, and enable us to think of them with comfort and hope, in the midst of our cares about them. They are dear to us, we look with pleasure upon these *olive plants round about our tables*, yet not without a mixture of pain, because children are (as we commonly say) certain cares, but uncertain comforts: these *arrows in the hand*, may prove arrows in the heart. *Absalom*, whose
name

name signifies "The peace of his father," lived to be his greatest trouble. But when we consider that we have brought them to Christ, and he has received them, we cannot but thank God and take courage. When we wish well to them, we would willingly hope well; and this is ground of hope that our Lord Jesus has expressed so much favour to little children.

1.) This may comfort and encourage the tender careful mothers in nursing them, that they are carrying those in their arms whom Christ hath taken up in his; not only their natural affection to them as pieces of themselves may sweeten and ease the pains they take about them, that makes even the *sea monsters draw out their breasts, and give suck to their young*, (Lam. 4. 3.) but their gracious affection to them as members of Christ, as beloved of him, and partakers of benefit by him, may much more do it. You are careful for them with all this care, they require a constant attendance, and many a time, it may be, break your sleep; but if you do it as unto the Lord, if you have an eye to Christ in it, "This I do for a child that is adopted into his family, as well as born into mine;" you may depend upon him to *pay you your wages*, tho' it be your own child, *Exod. 2. 9*. Your care about your little ones keeps you from church, it may be, many a time, and keeps you that you cannot spend so much time in your closets as you used to do: but if thus it be sanctified by an eye to our Lord Jesus and by your prayers to God for them as his, more than as your own, you are therein truly *serving the Lord Christ* yourselves, and not only so, but are breeding up servants for him, that you hope will be vessels of grace and glory.

2.) This may comfort and encourage us if our children labour under any bodily weaknesses and infirmities, if they be unhealthful and often ailing,
which

which is an allay to our comfort in them: let this serve to balance that; if they belong to Christ, and be blessed of him, they are blessed indeed, and nothing amiss of that kind shall be any prejudice to their blessedness, or diminution of it, but may, being sanctified, become rather a friend and furtherance to it. Many have been the wiser and better, the more humble and heavenly, for their having *borne the yoke* of affliction in their youth, *Lam. 3. 27.* You see what an affection Christ discovered for these children, and may conclude by reflecting upon yourselves, that he has a particular tenderness for children in affliction. Those are commonly most indulged by their parents that are sickly, and *like as a father pities those children*, so doth the Lord Jesus much more, as he often evidenced when he was upon earth. As the abiding illnesses of the children are the parents continual affliction, it is a cross they are to take up daily; so the abiding compassions of Christ towards them, ought to be their continual consolation, and a cordial they may have recourse to daily.

3.) This may comfort and encourage us in teaching and catechizing our children, in giving them a pious education, and in praying with them and for them, that we are doing it for Christ; that we are *workers together with him*, and we may hope he will work together with us, and then our labour shall not be in vain: if we have given them to Christ, they shall be taught by his spirit, and are within the reach of that precious promise, that *all shall know God, from the least even to the greatest*, *Heb. 8. 11.* It may be they are dull and slow, and not so apt to learn as we could wish. Christ's own disciples were so, yet he bore with them, and brought them at last to a full assurance of understanding, and therefore despair not concerning your children that are but of a small capacity. It may

may be your children are hopeful and forward, and very promising, and it is your joy to see it, in hopes they will be ornaments to your families; but it ought to be much more so, in hopes they will be in their day faithful servants to the interest of God's kingdom among men. And what prospect can be more pleasing, next to that of our own everlasting bliss, than to have good hope through grace, that our children shall be praising God on earth, when we are praising him in heaven, and that we and they shall be together for ever praising him. *I have no greater joy, saith the apostle, than to hear that my children walk in the truth.*

4.) This may comfort and encourage us in all our cares concerning our children when they grow up, in providing for them, and disposing of them. If we have in sincerity given them up to Christ, and he has accepted of them, we may hope he will dispose of every thing that concerns them, for the best, and they shall in this world reap the benefit of the promises made to the faithful and their seed; and the prayers made by the faithful for their seed. If they be not feasted, yet *verily they shall be fed*, Psal. 37. 3. 16. If we have but little to give them, yet the blessing of Christ upon that little, will make it every way better to them than the riches of many wicked. Many, no doubt, have had reason to acknowledge that their comfortable passage through this world has been very much owing to the blessing of Christ, upon their early dedication to him, and education for him. If Christ has taken up our little ones into his arms, provided they do not by their wickedness throw themselves out of his arms, we may be sure he is *able to keep what we have committed to him*, through all the attempts of an ensnaring world, that he will never drop them, neither shall any *pluck them out of his hands*, John 10. 28.

5.) This

5.) This may comfort and encourage us, if our children be removed from us by death in their childhood. This is a common case; that which *came forth like a flower*, is soon cut down, and the gourd which came up one night, and which we were *exceeding glad of*, withers the next night, and leaves us in tears. Now it is enough to silence us in such a case, that it is the *Lord that gave*, and the *Lord that taketh away*, and *if he taketh away who can binder him?* May he not do what he will with his own? Let *Aaron* therefore *hold his peace*, for God is glorified: but this goes further, and may satisfy us that if Christ has owned them in the kingdom of his grace, he will receive them into the kingdom of his glory. We are indeed kept in the dark concerning the state of those that die in infancy, they are left to the mercy of God*, but the children that are given up to Christ by their believing parents, are not left to uncovenanted mercy: *The Lord knows them that are his*; it shall go well with those whom Christ has taken up in his arms, and blessed. He who was so well pleased with the childrens hosannas, even in the old *Jerusalem*, (*Matt. 21. 15, 16.*) will reckon himself glorified by their hallelujahs in the new *Jerusalem*.

6.) This may comfort and encourage us if we should be taken away from our children by death, while they are little. This also is a common case, and a mournful one. We know not how soon we may fall under the arrests of death, and may see the day, that awful day approaching, which will *cut off the number of our months in the midst*. In such a case as to our own souls, we may perhaps be able to say as our master did with an air of triumph, *John 17. 11. Now we are no more in this world*

* We may assuredly conclude *it is not the will of our heavenly Father that one of these little ones should perish.*

(O that

(O that we may be able at such a time with this cheerfulness to say so!) But though we should, yet like him concerning his disciples, we must say concerning our children, *But these are in the world.* How shall we leave them? Where and with whom shall we leave them? With whom but with him who hath said, *Jer. 49. 11. Leave thy fatherless children with me; I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in me;* who hath taken it among the titles of his honour to be a *father of the fatherless,* and a *judge of the widows,* *Psal. 68. 5.* If we have made Christ guardian to our children, let us make it appear we are intirely well satisfied in his wisdom and faithfulness.

But lastly, What may we have to comfort and encourage us, if our children should prove wicked and vile; if they should forsake *their God,* and the *God of their fathers,* and walk in *the paths of the destroyer,* notwithstanding our utmost endeavours to engage them for Christ? It is very often a case in fact, we cannot deny it: It is possible the best parents may have the worst children; yet if we should suppose a falling from grace and holiness *adherent,* which through the divine condescension and compassion might have availed to the salvation of such as die in infancy, that will not infer a falling from grace and holiness *inherent;* what Christ doth herein *we know not now, but we shall know hereafter.* But disputes in this case are cold comforts to the poor parents, whose hearts bleed and break to see the destructive courses which their children take, whom they thought they had lodged safe in the hands of the Mediator, for whom they have prayed many a prayer, and shed many a tear: they thought Christ had taken them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them, but it doth not prove so. What shall we say to comfort such?

It may be some satisfaction to them, that how-

82 *Christ's Favour to little Children, &c.*

ever it goes with their children, Christ will be glorified; if they do not give honour to him, he will get himself honour upon them. And if God be sanctified, we ought to be satisfied; and with reverence to *behold both the goodness and severity of God; on them which fall, severity; but towards them that stand, goodness; if they continue in his goodness;* Rom. 11. 22.

But it will be yet more satisfaction to them, if they have the testimony of their consciences for them, that they have done their duty, which they did with a resolution to leave the event with God. They knew they could not give grace to their children; but their hearts can witness for them, that, to the best of their power, they *digged about these barren trees, and dunged them, as the dresser of the vineyard did; and if they bring forth fruit well, they shall have the comfort, and God the glory; but if not, they must be content to see them cut down, and though they cannot have comfort in that, yet God will have glory, and they must acquiesce, [under a firm persuasion that the judge of the earth will do right, and that none shall perish but thro' their own unbelief.]*

But the greatest comfort of all in such a case is, that the unbelief and disobedience of their children shall not make void God's promise to them, and therefore ought not to make void their comfort in God. *Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious,* Isa. 49. 5. *Abraham* is happy in heaven, though there be those in hell that can call *Abraham* father. It was the comfort of holy *David*, 2 Sam. 23. 5. though he saw a great deal of sin and trouble in his family, *Although my house be not so with God as I could wish it, yet I am sure of this, he has made with me an everlasting covenant, which is well-ordered in all things and sure, and that is all my salvation, and therefore shall be all my desire.*

S E R M O N III.

Concerning the Catechizing of Youth*.

2 TIM. I. 13.

Hold fast the Form of sound Words which thou hast heard of me, in Faith and Love which is in Christ Jesus.

BLESSED Paul in this, as in the former epistle, giving wholesome advice and instruction to Timothy, for the enforcing of it, among other things, puts him in mind of his education, and the advantages of that; the good principles which by it had been instilled into him, and the good practices he had been trained up in: and upon trial, now he came to years of understanding, he could not but see that they were good; let him therefore adhere to them, and abide by them, and now build upon the foundation then laid. He particularly mentions the two great advantages which he was blessed with, in his childhood and youth; that he was bred up both under the tuition of godly parents, and under the direction and in-

* Preached to Mr. Harris's Catechumens, April 7, 1713

struction of an able faithful ministry; and both these are requisite to compleat the blessings of a religious education.

1. He had been well taught by his godly parents, *v. 5. 6.* his grandmother *Lois*, and his mother *Eunice*, whose *unfeigned faith* the Apostle would have him frequently to think of, and thereby be minded to *stir up the gift of God that was in him*. His father was a *Greek*, one that had little religion in him, but left it to his mother to bring him up as she thought fit; and she and his grandmother were not wanting to season the vessel betimes with a good favour: so that from a child he knew the holy scriptures, and was made wise to salvation by them, *2 Tim. 3. 15.* It is a great opportunity which mothers have, and and which prudent pious mothers will improve, to fill the minds of their children when they are young with good knowledge, and to form them to a good disposition. If the tree must be bent, it must be done when it is young and tender, and with a very gentle easy hand, for the spirit is not to be broken, but be bowed.

2. He had been well taught by *St. Paul* too. His mother and grandmother had taught him the scriptures, and made him ready in them, as a *child* of God; then *Paul* expounded the scriptures more fully to him, and by the grace of God made him mighty in them, so that he became *a man of God*, thoroughly furnished to all good works. The text speaks of the *form of sound words*, which he had heard of *Paul*, either in private lectures read to him as his pupil, or in his public preaching and catechizing, on which *Timothy* was constantly and diligently attending.

Now those two methods of instruction, both by parents in their families, and by ministers in more public assemblies, are necessary, and do mutually assist each other; and neither will serve to excuse

for the other. Let not parents think to leave it wholly to ministers, as if because their children are well taught in publick, they need not take any pains with them at home. No; there the foundation must be laid, and there the improvement by publick catechizing must be examined, and there a more particular application must be made according to the children's capacities and dispositions, than it is possible for ministers to make in publick. The people of *Israel* had the *Levites* dispersed among them, whose office it was to *teach them the good knowledge of the Lord*; and yet it is required of parents that they not only receive God's words into their own hearts, but that they teach them diligently to their children, and talk of them in their families, and tell those under their charge the meaning of the testimonies and judgments which he had commanded them, *Deut.* 6. 7, 20. If father, or mother, or both, do not teach their children first, and teach them last too, they will not be fit for, nor much the better by publick catechizing.

On the other hand, let not ministers think to leave it wholly to parents; as if, because the children were well taught at home, they needed not contribute any help of theirs to their instruction. The great shepherd of the sheep hath charged them to *feed his lambs* with food proper for them, *John* 21. 15. Besides the natural authority and affection of parents, it is fit that the spiritual authority and affection of ministers likewise should be improved for the advantage of the rising generation. And it may be presumed, that according to the gift given to them, they have greater abilities for instruction than the parents ordinarily have. In teaching your children other arts and sciences, tho' you may have some insight into them yourselves, yet you make use of those that particularly profess

those arts and sciences, and make it their business to teach them; and will you not do so in that which it is the one thing needful for them to learn well. You are to feed your kids, but you must do it beside the shepherd's tents, under the conduct of a gospel ministry.

Now *Timothy* having had this double advantage, *Paul* urgeth him still to proceed in that good way wherein he had so well set out; to hold fast that form of sound words, which he had received.

1. This implies that he had a form of sound words delivered to him by *Paul*; a brief summary of the christian doctrine, and of all those things which are most surely believed among christians, as *St. Luke* expresseth it, *Luke* 1. 1. ὑποτύπωσιν; a delineation, a scheme, or rough draught of the gospel institutes. It is a metaphor taken from painters; in drawing a face they first draw the shape and lines of it, and then fill it up with proper colours: such a model or plan of the truths and laws of Christ *Timothy* had, as he might afterwards in his meditation and preaching enlarge upon. Whether this form of sound words was a creed, or confession of faith, I cannot say; I rather think it was in the way of a catechism, because that method of instruction was used in the early ages of the church; for we find it alluded to in *St. Peter's* ἐπερώτημα, *1 Pet.* 3. 21. the answer of a good conscience, or rather the *interrogation*; so that I think if we apply it especially to our catechisms, to the forms of sound words so formed, we shall offer no violence at all in the text.

2. Here is a charge to him to hold it fast; ἔχει have it. Have it by thee, have it with thee, have it in thee, have it always ready for use; do not part with it, nor in any instance depart from it. Have it, that is, make it to appear that thou hast it; as to

to have grace, Heb. 12. 28. is to have it in act and exercise, and to him that so has, and uses what he has, shall be given. Or as we read it, *hold it fast*. It was delivered to us to have and to hold, and we have it in vain if we do not hold it.

Accordingly we may hence learn,

I. That good catechisms, containing the grounds and principles of the christian religion, are useful forms of sound words, and it is a great mercy to have heard and learned those forms.

II. Those that have heard and learned the good forms of sound words, must hold them fast in faith and love.

I. It is of very great advantage to young people, to hear and learn the Christian forms of sound words in the days of their youth: to have been well taught some good catechism, or confession of faith. Observe here,

First, The words of the gospel are *sound words*, or as some render *ὡς ἰαμβόριον*, healthful, wholesome, healing words. Put both together, and it intimates,

1. That there is value and validity in the words of the gospel, as there is in that which is sound and firm, and in good condition: they are what they seem, and there is no cheat in them; try them, and you will find you may trust them, as you may that which is sound, and will never be made ashamed of your confidence in them. Men speak with flattering lips, and with a double heart, but the *words of the Lord* are *pure words*, and have no mixture of falsehood in them, *Psal.* 12. 2. The law was written in stone, to intimate its stability and perpetuity; and the gospel is no less firm; every iota and title of both shall survive heaven and earth, *Mat.* 5. 18.

Affure yourselves, brethren, the words of the gospel which we preach to you, and which you are

trained up in the knowledge of, are unchangeable, and inviolable. Holy Job's creed concerning his Redeemer, was *graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever*; much more is ours so. It is what you may venture your souls and your everlasting welfare upon. That is a sound word, *1 Tim. 1. 15.* that *Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief*: and that is a sound word, *1 John 5. 11.* that *God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son*. It is sound speech that cannot be condemned, for it has been more than a thousand times tried, and it stands firm as the everlasting mountains. *These are the true sayings of God*; and if we compare the traditions of the elders, or the speculations of the philosophers with them, we shall say with the prophet, *what is the chaff to the wheat?* Jer. 23. 28.

2. That there is virtue to be drawn from them for healing and health to us. They are not only clear from every thing that is hurtful and unwholesome, but there is that in them which is medicinal and restorative, not only of health and strength, but of life itself. *These waters of the sanctuary, these leaves of the tree of life, are healing to the nations*, Ezek. 47. 8, 9. These words, if duly applied and mixed with faith, restore the soul, and put it in frame, heal its maladies, and reduce to a just temper its distempered and disordered powers. It was said of old concerning those that were sick, that *God sent his word and healed them*. And when Christ was here upon earth, it was by the power of his word that he *healed all that had need of healing*, and in a sense of their need applied themselves to him for it. And this was a figure of the efficacy of the word of the gospel for the healing of diseased souls, a divine power going along with it, and in it the *son of righteousness ariseth* in the soul, as it did in the world, *with healing under his wings*, Mal. 4. 2.

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Let this therefore recommend to you the words we teach you, that they are not only of inestimable value in themselves, but will be of unspeakable advantage to you. They are healing words indeed, for they are regenerating and re-creating; *words whereby you may be saved*, Acts 11. 14. Mix faith with them, and you will experience the power of them, setting you to rights, and giving you a new life and vigour. They are therefore not only faithful sayings, but well worthy of all acceptance; of your acceptance. Accept them therefore, and receive the benefit of them, that you receive not God's grace in vain. If they be in vain, and you be not healed by them, the fault is in yourselves.

Secondly, It is good to have *forms* of these sound words drawn up for the use of those that are to learn the *first principles of the oracles of God*; not to be *imposed* as of equal authority with the scriptures, but to be proposed in order to the further study of the scriptures.

Bear us witness, we set up no other rule of faith and practice, no other oracle, no other touchstone or test of orthodoxy, but the *holy scriptures* of the Old and New Testament: *these only* are the fountains whence we fetch our knowledge; *these only* are the *foundations* on which we build our Faith and Hope. These are the dernier resort of all our enquiries and appeals in the things of God, for they only are given by divine inspiration. This is the principle we abide by, to the law and to the testimony, *Isa.* 8. 20. that is the *regula regulans*, the rule ruling; and far be it from us that we should set up *any form of words* in competition with it, much less in contradiction to it; or admit any *rival* with it in the conduct and guardianship of our souls, as some do the traditions of the church, and others, I know not what light within. Every other help we have for
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our souls we make use of as *regula regulata*, a rule ruled, in subordination and subserviency to the scripture, and among the rest our catechisms and confessions of faith.

Give me leave to illustrate this by an appeal to the gentlemen of the long robe: they know very well that the common law of England lies in the year book, and books of reports, in the records of immemorial customs, and in cases occasionally adjudged; which are not an artificial system drawn up by the rules of method, but rather historical collections of what was solemnly discussed, and judiciously delivered in several reigns, *pro re natâ*, and always taken for law, and according to which the practice has always been. Such are the books of the scripture; histories of the several ages of the church, as those of the several reigns of the kings, and of the discoveries of God's mind and will in every age, as there was occasion, and these two built upon ancient principles received and submitted to before these divine annals began to be written. But tho' those are the fountains and foundations of the law, those gentlemen know that institutes and abridgments, collections of, and references to the cases adjudged in the books, are of great use to them, to prepare them for the study of the originals, and to assist them in the application of them, but are not thought to derogate from the authority and honour of them. Such we reckon our forms of sound words to be; if in any thing they mistake the sense of the text, or misapply it, they must be corrected by it; but as far as they agree with it, they are of great use to make it more easy and ready to us.

That which is intended in these forms of sound words, is not like the Council of *Trent* to make a new creed, and add to it what we have in the scripture,

ture, but to collect and methodize the truths and laws of God, and to make them familiar.

1. By these forms of sound words, the main principles of christianity, which lie scattered in the scripture, are collected and brought together. We know that *all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable*, and that there is no idle word in God's book, nothing that is unnecessary: but we know that all is not alike profitable, or alike necessary. Every line in a well-drawn picture is of use, and answers some end, but every line is not alike serviceable to the main design of the picture, which is to represent the face of the person whose picture it is; yet we must not say therefore, that it might as well have been spared. The scripture gives us the things of God in their native purity and plainness, yet not without their proper illustrations. It is naked truth that is, without disguise, and the ambiguity which *Apollo's* oracles were noted for, but not naked truth without dress and ornament. Now our catechisms and confessions of faith pick up from the several parts of holy writ, those passages, which, though perhaps occasionally delivered, contain the essentials of religion, the foundations and main pillars upon which christianity is built; which we are concerned rightly to understand, and firmly to believe in the first place, and then to go on to perfection. We cannot contain all the scripture; but there are some more weighty and comprehensive sayings, which (like those which the Jews wrote in their Phylacteries) we should bind for a sign upon our hand, and which should be as frontlets between our eyes, *Deut. 6. 8.* And our forms of sound words furnish us with these.

2. By these the truths of God are methodized and put in order. The several books of scripture are written in an excellent method, according as
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the particular nature and intention of them is, and they are put together in an admirable good order: but when out of them the main principles of religion are to be gathered, it is necessary that they be put into some method proper to serve the design of representing them at one view, that we may understand them the more distinctly, by observing their mutual references to each other, their connexion with, and dependance upon each other; and thereby they appear in their truer light, and fuller lustre. These forms of sound words shew us the order that is in God's words, as well as in his works; the harmony of divine truths: how one thing tends to another, and all centre in Christ, and the glory of God in Christ: and thus, like the stones in an arch, they mutually support, and strengthen, and fix one another. They are as a map of the Land of Promise, by the help of which we may travel it over with our eye in a little time, and know the true situation of every tribe, though we cannot give a particular description of every part of its inheritance.

3. By these the truths of God are brought down to the capacity of young ones, and those that are as yet but weak in understanding, Not that God hath *spoke in secret, in a dark place of the earth*; no, the words of Wisdom's mouth *are all plain to him that understandeth*; Prov. 8. 9. but to those who are yet babes they need to be explained; to them we must *give the sense, and cause them to understand the reading*; Neh. 8. 8. and this is in part done by those forms of sound words, which lead us by the hand as it were into the knowledge of *the truth as it is in Jesus*. Not that we need to seek *other words than those which the Holy Ghost teacheth*; 1 Cor. 2. 13. they are the most proper vehicle of the things which are *given us of God to know*, and it is *unsafe to depart from them*. Many, under pretence of refining upon the scripture, and expressing the things

things contained in it more philosophically, have but *darkened counsel by words without knowledge*: Job 38. 2. The faithful servant will deliver his message as near as he can in his master's own words; go, (saith God to *Ezekiel*) *get thee to the house of Israel*, and do not only speak my words, but *speaking with my words to them*, Ezek. 3. 4.

But *spiritual things* must be *compared with spiritual*, and by the plainer parts of scripture those must be explained that are more *dark and hard to be understood*; and this is done by our forms of sound words, which make the principles of religion to be as *milk for babes*, who as yet cannot bear *strong meat*, Heb. 5. 12. The ten commandments are a divine form of sound words, to direct our practice, but they are short and exceeding comprehensive; it is therefore necessary that we be taught from other scriptures, what each commandment requires and forbids. The Lord's Prayer is another divine form of sound words to direct our petitions, but that also is short and comprehensive, and it is requisite we should be taught from other scriptures, what we pray for in each petition. The form of Baptism is another divine form of sound words, peculiar to the christian dispensation, but that also needs to be explained by other scriptures, as it is excellently well in the ancient creeds. And all these divine forms of sound words you have fully and faithfully set before you; and opened to you in the *Assembly's* larger and shorter *Catechism*; as blessed be God they are in many other, both in our own and other reformed churches.

Thirdly, Those are happy that are well taught, and have well learned those forms of sound words when they are young. It is a great privilege, and a very improvable one, to be betimes instructed in the principles of religion, and to have the truths of Christ instilled into us in the days of our youth,
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and to be trained up in an acquaintance and converse with them from the first, by the care of godly parents especially, who have many advantages in dealing with children which ministers cannot have: To be put betimes upon reading the scripture, and getting portions of it by heart; remembering and repeating sermons; to be taught the catechism, and examined in it, and not only made to say it, but made, as we are capable, to understand it, and taught to prove it by scripture, and give a reason for it; to be directed to pray, and obliged to it, and to a strict observation of the Lord's day, in order to all this. And if to all this be added, ministerial catechizing, the more copious and accurate explication of the mysteries of God by the appointed stewards of those mysteries, it consummates the happiness of a religious education, from which abundant advantages may be reaped, if it be wisely and faithfully improved.

I know I speak to those that enjoy this privilege, on whom the doctrine of Christ not only comes down in showers in the preaching of the word, but on whom it distils more slowly and softly *as the dew; and as the small rain upon the tender herb*, in catechizing: and I commend your pious zeal in coveting and seeking instruction this way: go on, and prosper; *the Lord is with you while you be with him*: I hope it is a token for good, and will prove so, that God has mercy in store for the next generation, that there are so many young people among us who are *asking the way to Zion*, and desire to be told it *with their faces thitherward*. *Who hath begotten us these?*

I know also there are many, and many there have been, who were blest with a religious education when they were young, and were then trained up in the way which they should go, who have afterwards turned aside from the holy commandment;
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who, though they were the seed of the faithful, yet have proved an unfaithful seed, and have themselves gone astray from their God. This should not discourage parents and ministers from doing their duty, in catechizing youth, but should direct them to look up to God for his grace, without which all our care and pains is fruitless, and we do but beat the air; and should engage you who are catechized to be jealous over yourselves, with a godly jealousy, that you may not be conceited of yourselves, or confident in yourselves; *may not be high-minded, but may always fear, lest you seem to come short* of that which is expected from you, or seem to fall off to any evil work or way; and that tho' now you think you stand, you may always *take heed lest you fall*.

But I know that your being thus catechized, if you improve it aright, and be not wanting to yourselves, will be of unspeakable advantage to you; and I hope it may be of use both to direct you and to encourage you, if I tell you how and which way it may be made so.

1. Hereby you are for some time well employed now you are young. Childhood and youth, upon this account, among others, are vanity; that so much time is then spent to so little purpose. But your being catechized obligeth you to spend at least some part of your time well, and so as you may afterwards reflect upon it with comfort and satisfaction, above many other, perhaps above any other of your precious moments. If the time which children and young people would otherwise spend in sport and recreation (called *pass-time*; tho' time passeth away fast enough of itself) be thus happily retrieved, and spent in good exercises, in conversing with the word of God, in reviewing and repeating to themselves the things of God; it is a kindness to them, and much greater than it would
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be to keep a man from spending an estate wastefully; and to put him into a way of getting one easily and honourably. Whatever goes with the rest of your time, here is so much of it spent so as to turn to a good account, and you may review it with comfort on the other side death and the grave. Those who are catechized either by their parents or ministers on the evening of the Lord's day, have a particular advantage therein; that those precious minutes are spent to such good purposes, which so many young people idle away in foolish talk, in the fields, or at the doors of their houses, which corrupts the mind and manners, and loseth what they have got, if they have got any thing by the duties of the day. These exercises will help to clench the nail that has been driven, that it may be a *nail in a sure place*. I know not how young people can be trained up to a better piece of good husbandry, than to a good husbandry of time, especially sabbath time, one minute of which is worth three of any other day.

2. Hereby you will become better able to understand the word preached, and more capable of profiting by it. It is the duty of ministers to preach the word, and therein to be *instant in season and out of season*; 2 Tim. 4. 1, 2. And if so, you are concerned to hear, so as that your souls may live, and therefore to *take heed how you hear*, and in order to your profiting to *hear with understanding*: the *highway* ground in our Saviour's parable, Matt. 13. 19. represents those that *hear the word of the kingdom, and understand it not*; for it is not plowed up and prepared to receive it; they are not instructed in the things that are spoken of, and therefore they that speak to them of those things are barbarians. They that are not catechized, nor taught the forms of sound words, apprehend not what we mean when we speak of their misery by nature, the sinfulness of sin, the mediation of Christ,

Christ, the operations of the spirit, and the great things of the other world; we had as good talk *Greek* to them: they are ready to say of us, as the people did of *Ezekiel's* preaching, *Doth he not speak parables?* Ezek. 20. 49. But you that are catechized understand our dialect, are acquainted with scripture-language, for you are accustomed to it, and can say this good word is the confirmation, and that the illustration, and the other the application, of what we have many a time heard and knew before, but thus are made to know better. And therefore tho' those who have not been catechized do most need instruction, by the preaching of the word (and for their sakes we must many a time stay to explain things that are most plain, wherein they that are strong ought to bear with us, in compassion to the infirmities of the weak) yet those that have been well catechized do most desire it, and delight in it, and edify by it, because they understand it.

3. Hereby you will have a foundation laid for a good work of grace in your souls to build upon. It is true that God in his favours to us, and his operations on us, acts as a God with an uncontestable sovereignty, and an irresistible power; but it is as true that he deals with men as men, as reasonable creatures, in a way suited to their nature; he *draws with the cords of a man*: Hof. 11. 4. he gains possession of the will and affections, by opening the understanding, informing the judgment, and rectifying the mistakes of that, and this is entering into the soul *by the door*; whereas satan debauches the affections, and so perverts the will, and bribes and blinds the understanding, which is *climbing up another way*, for he is a *thief and a robber*. Christ opens the understanding, and so *makes the heart to burn*; opens mens eyes, and causeth the scales to fall from them, and so turns men from Satan to God. Tho' Christ can give an understanding im-

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mediately, as to *Paul*, yet ordinarily he enlightens it in the use of means; and gives a knowledge of divine things by the instructions of parents and ministers, and afterwards by his Spirit and grace brings them home to the mind and conscience, delivers the soul into the mould of them, and by them works a saving change in it. It was the prerogative of an apostle to come to the knowledge of the gospel, not by man, nor to be taught it, but *by the revelation of Jesus Christ*; Gal. 1. 12. we must come to the knowledge of it in the way of instituted ordinances, and none more likely to prepare for the particular applications of divine grace, than this particular application of good instruction by catechizing.

4. Hereby you will be armed against the assaults and insinuations of seducers, and such as lye in wait to deceive, and draw you aside into the paths of error. Satan is a *roaring lion*, that seeks in this way to *devour* souls, and none are such an easy prey to him as those that are ignorant and unskilful in the word of righteousness. But those that are well instructed in the forms of sound words, and understand the evidence of divine truths, are aware of the fallacies with which others are beguiled; and know how to get over them, for *surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird*. They that *grow in the knowledge of Christ*, will not be visibly *led away by the error of the wicked*, so as to *fall from their own steadfastness*, 2 Pet. 3. 17, 18. They that are thus established when they are children, will not be always *children tossed about with every wind of doctrine*. Those that are well catechized are well fortified against temptations to atheism and infidelity, which, under pretence of free-thinking, invite men to false and foolish thinking and by debauching their principles, corrupt their morals: as also against temptations to vice and immorality, which, under pretence of a free conversation,

versation, enslave the soul to the most brutish lusts, and by corrupting the morals, debauch the principles. It will likewise be an excellent antidote against the poison of popery, a national zeal against which is then likely to be an effectual defence of the Protestant religion, when it is a *zeal according to knowledge*. A right understanding of the offices and ordinances of Christ, the former of which are daringly usurped, and the latter wickedly corrupted and prophaned in the church of *Rome*, will, by the blessing of God, preserve us from going in with those strong delusions, though the temptation should be never so strong, and prepare us to suffer, rather than to sin, if we should be called out to it.

5. Hereby you will be furnished for doing good to others, in the places where God has set you. Your being well instructed in the forms of sound words, will qualify you to be useful in your generation for the glory of God, and the edification of many, which will be your honour and comfort now, and will add to your crown hereafter. Out of a good treasure of christian knowledge well laid up when you are young, you will be able, like the *good householder*, to *bring forth things new and old*, as there is occasion, for the entertainment and benefit of others. *Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth will speak*. Hereby you will be able to resist and oppose that *evil communication* which *corrupts good manners*, and to *put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*; and not only so, but to advance and keep up that communication which is good, and to the use of edifying, which may manifest grace in your hearts, and minister grace to the hearers. These forms of sound words will teach you that *sound speech which cannot be condemned*. And thus your *lips will feed many*. It will likewise be of great use to you in *prayer*, both in secret, and with your families,

families, when God calls you to the charge of families. With what solid judgment, exact method, aptness, and variety of expression, have I heard private Christians, that have been well instructed in the things of God, and conversant with the scripture, offer up their prayers and supplications to God, without the help of any other forms, but these forms of sound words, and this with such undisssembled indications of pious affection, as has been very proper to kindle and excite, to raise and carry on the devotions of those that joined with them. Some who are severe in their reflections upon all extemporary prayer, would not be so if they knew this so well as I have done.

6. Hereby those that have a good work of grace begun in them, will be greatly assisted in the progress of it. *Timothy*, by the help of these forms of sound words, is *nourished up in faith and good doctrine, whereto he has attained*, 1 Tim. 4. 6. They that have pure hearts and clean hands, hereby shall become stronger and stronger in judgment, in affection, and in resolution. The more firmly the foundation is laid, the broader and the higher the building may be carried; and the better we understand the road we are to travel, the better we shall get forward in our journey. Knowing Christians are carried on as upon *eagles wings*; they *run and are not weary*.

Those who have some good measures of knowledge and grace, may be greatly improved in both, by attending upon publick catechizing; and if young, by bearing a part in it. *Apollos* was an *eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures*, and he was *instructed in the way of the Lord*, Acts, 18. 24, 25, 26. κατηχησάμενος, he was *catechized*, so the word is, and he was *fervent in spirit*, yet he was still willing to learn, and found advantage by it; for there were those that took him, and expounded to him

him the way of God *more perfectly*. Those that think they understand the way of God pretty well, yet should still be increasing with the increase of God, should not think they have already attained, or are already perfect, but should be pressing forwards, and covet to understand the way of God more perfectly.

7. Hereby you will have your memories well stored for your own use, and will have always good matter ready at hand for pious thoughts and meditations. It is certainly as much the benefit, as it is the duty of Christians, to converse much in their hearts with the things of God: it is the character of the blessed man, and an evidence of his delighting in the law of God after the inner man, that in that law *he meditates day and night*, Ps. 1. 2. *O how do I love it!* saith David; *it is my meditation all the day*; Ps. 119. 97. and if David could find such employment and entertainment for his thoughts, from morning till night, in the law of God, much more may we find it in that, and the Gospel of Christ too, which so far excels it. Now one reason why this duty of meditation is so much neglected, is, because people want matter for their thoughts to enlarge and expatiate upon; and the reason of that is, because they were never *enriched*, as they should have been, *in all knowledge*; 1 Cor. 1. 5. their stock is soon exhausted, and they know not what to think of next. But if you get an abundance of good knowledge, you will never be to seek for something proper and useful to entertain yourselves with. You soon forget the sermons you hear; but if your catechism was well learned, and the proofs of it, you can never forget them; so that you may at any time take an answer of your catechism, and dwell upon that in your thoughts, till your hearts burn within you.

8. Hereby you will be enabled to transmit, pure and entire, to those that come after you, that good thing which is committed to you. The truths and ordinances of Christ are a sacred *depositum*; a trust handed down to us by our predecessors in profession, and lodged in our hands to be carefully kept in our day, and faithfully transferred to the generations to come: but how can we do that, if we be not ourselves both rightly and fully apprized of it? We are false to this trust, not only if we betray it by the admission of heresy and idolatry, but if we lose it, and let it drop by ignorance and carelessness; by unacquaintedness with, and unconcernedness for, the interests of christianity. We of this age cannot otherwise repay what we received from those that went before us, but by consigning the value received to those that come after us; nor make any other requital to our parents, for giving us a good education, but by giving the like to our children; which therefore with the utmost care and pains we should qualify ourselves to do, and then make conscience of doing. And those that have not children of their own, ought to do it for the children of their relations, and of the poor, and to promote publick catechizings and charity schools; and thus contribute what they can to the raising up of a *seed to serve* Christ, which shall be *accounted to him for a generation*. What has been told to us of the wondrous works of God, we must *tell to our children*, that they may tell them to their children, that those which shall be created may praise the Lord, Ps. 78. 5, 6.

P A R T II.

Having shewn the usefulness of catechizing, we now proceed to the

IId. Ob-

IId. Observation, viz. Those that have the privilege to hear and learn the forms of sound words, with it have a charge to hold them fast in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus.

This implies that you are in danger of losing them, and being robbed of them through your own negligence; of having them snatched out of your hands by your spiritual enemies, or drop through your fingers if you do not hold them fast. Satan is that wicked one that steals the word of God out of the hearts of the careless hearers and learners, as the fowls of the air do the seed from the high-way ground, that it could not have any root in, *Mat. 13. 19.* Many have had the form of sound words, and with it a *form of godliness*, and a name to live, but have let them go, and lost them; have made shipwreck of the faith, and of their own souls. Let their falls be warnings to us, and let us therefore fear lest we also *come short*, or so much as *seem to come short*.

I speak to those that *have* the form of sound words: those that *have hold* of it: in God's name therefore I charge you to *hold it fast*; to *keep* your hold of it, *in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus*.

First, You must *hold it fast*, that is, you must retain the remembrance of it.

Keep it in mind and memory: you have it, see that you always have it; that you have it ready for your use upon all occasions. Great stress is laid upon this: the gospel is that *by which we are saved*, *if we keep in memory what has been preached unto us*, *1 Cor. 15. 1, 2.* Not as if the bare remembering and being able to recite these sound words, and the forms of them, were sufficient to save us; they do not heal as charms and spells pretend to do, meerly by the repeating or writing of them. A man may be able to say all the bible over by heart, and yet come short of grace and glory. But the

remembering of these things is necessary to our due improvement of them, and to the other duties required of us. If we so remember the covenant, as to be ever mindful of it; if we remember his commandments to do them, we remember them aright, 1 Chron. 16. 15.

1. It will be of good use to you, to retain the *words* you now learn and hear; and in order to that, frequently to review them, to catechize yourselves, and repeat them over to yourselves. What you said to your parents perhaps by rote, when you were children, and not yet capable of knowing the intent and extent of, you should now say to yourselves, with understanding, and judgment, and affection. Let not the wisest and best be ashamed to repeat the words of their catechism, as they have occasion to quote them, but let them rather be ashamed that cannot do it; that can remember all their days the idle foolish stories and songs they learned when they were young, but forget the forms of those words whereby they must be saved, and must be judged.

2. It is of absolute necessity that you retain the remembrance of the *things*, so as to have them ready for use, tho' it be in your own words. It is necessary that you should be well acquainted with the mystery of the gospel, with your need of a Saviour, with the method in which the salvation was wrought out by the son of God, and is applied by the spirit of God; with the breadth of the commandment, and with the strictness and spiritual nature of it, with the tenour of the new covenant, and the precious privileges of it, and with the great truths concerning the upper and future world: in these things you have been instructed, and are concerned to give the more earnest heed to the things you have heard, lest at any time you let them slip, Heb. 2. 1. Consider,

(1.) They

(1.) They are things worth remembering: things of inestimable value in themselves, and of vast importance and concern to us; in comparison with which, abundance of other things which we stuff our memories with, are but toys and trash. How many things do we retain the remembrance of, which tend to defile our minds, or to disquiet them, which we would willingly forget if we could! And how many more are we industrious to keep in memory, which serve only to the carrying on of our business in the world, whilst that is seldom or never seriously thought of, and so comes by degrees to be in a manner forgotten, *which belongs to our peace, our everlasting peace*; and justly may that *be hid from our eyes*, which we thus hide our eyes from, *Luke 19. 41.* The reason *Moses* gives to *Israel* why they should set their hearts to all the words he testified to them, *Deut. 32. 46, 47.* will hold more strongly, why we should treasure up Christ's word in our hearts, and let it *dwell in us richly*, that *it is not a vain thing for us*, but *it is our life*, and the lives of our souls depend upon it.

(2.) The remembrance of them will be of very great and good use to us daily, both to fortify us against every evil word and work, by suggesting to us the most powerful arguments against sin, and the most pertinent answers to the temptations of Satan; and likewise to furnish us for every good word and work, by suggesting to us both the wisest directions, and the sweetest encouragements in doing our duty. If we hold fast these forms of sound words as we ought, our mouth, like that of the *righteous*, *shall speak wisdom*, and our tongue shall be able to *talk of judgment*: and if thus the *law of our God* be in our heart, *none of our steps shall slide*. *Solomon* therefore writes to us *excellent things in counsel and knowledge*, that we may *answer the words of truth to those that send unto us*, *Prov. 22. 20, 21*, or, as the

margin reads it, *to those that send us*; to God that sent us into the world to do all the good we can in it.

(3.) It was for this end that we have heard and learned them, that we might lay them up in our hearts, in order to their being of use to us hereafter; so that we receive the grace of God therein in vain, if we do not retain them. They are not intended merely for your present exercise and entertainment, and as a task upon you to keep you employed, much less as an amusement to keep up in you a reverence for your parents and teachers; but they were intended to fit you for the service of God in this world, and the vision and fruition of him in a better world. You learn your catechism not as you that were designed for tradesmen learned Latin and Greek, when you went to school, it may be, with design to forget it, because you had a notion you should never have occasion for it in your business; but as you learned to write and cast accompts, with design to retain it, because you were told you would have use for it daily in carrying on your trade. You are taught now, that as long as you live, you may live according to what you are taught.

(4.) You will be called to an account shortly for these, as well as your other advantages, and therefore are concerned to improve them, so that you may *give up your account with joy*; such joy as shall be an earnest of that joy of their Lord, into which the good and faithful servants, that have diligently and faithfully improved their talents, shall enter, and in which they shall be for ever happy. For your having heard and learned these things, will but aggravate your condemnation if you do not hold them fast. You know what was *Chorazin's* doom, and *Bethsaida's*, and *Capernaum's*: tremble lest it should be yours. It is an awful thought which I have somewhere met with, "That the professors

“ of this age, in which there is such plenty of the
“ means of knowledge and grace, whether they go
“ to heaven or hell, will be the greatest debtors
“ in either of these places : If to heaven, the greatest
“ debtors to divine mercy and grace for those im-
“ proved means that helped to bring them thither ;
“ if to hell, the greatest debtors to divine justice
“ for those abused means that would have helped
“ to keep them thence.”

Let not what I have said of the necessity of remembering the sound words we hear, discourage any serious conscientious christians, that have honest and good hearts, but weak and treacherous memories ; nor make the righteous sad, who ought not to be made sad. You that tremble at God's word, do really get good by it, tho' you cannot recollect the method and language in which it is delivered you. If you live in the fear of God, and in a course of holy watchfulness against sin, and diligence in duty, you retain the impressions of the word, though you cannot retain the expressions of it. I have been told of a good man, who was much affected with a sermon he heard (suppose) concerning the vanity of the world, and commending it afterwards to a friend, was desired to give some account of the sermon : “ Truly, saith he, I
“ cannot remember any thing of it, but I am re-
“ solved, by the grace of God, I will never set
“ my heart so much upon this world, as I have
“ done,” why then (saith his friend) “ thou re-
“ memberest all.” *David* will never forget God's precepts, for (saith he) by them thou hast quickened me, *Psal.* 119. 93. If we find our hearts quickened by the word, we do not forget it, and it is to be hoped we will not, we shall not forget it. Put a sieve that is dirty into the water, and tho' when you take it out it carries away little or nothing of the water with it, yet it is washed and
made

made clean. Tho' we cannot repeat the good sermons we have heard, yet if through grace our hearts and ways are purified by them, they are not lost.

But let what I have said engage you that hear and learn the forms of sound words, to hold *them* fast, to imprint them in your minds and memory, that you may have them ready to you at all times, as occasion requires. In order to this, labour to understand them, and let your knowledge be clear and distinct, and then you will be likely to retain it. Set every truth in its proper place, and then you will know where to find it. Set it in its true light, and then you will know what use to make of it. Get your hearts duly affected with divine things, and abide and act under the power and influence of them, and then you will remember them. Be often repeating them to yourselves: the Virgin *Mary* kept the sayings of Christ, by pondering them in her heart, *Luke 2. 19.*

Secondly, You must hold it fast in faith.

It is not enough to remember the good truths that are taught you, but you must mix them with faith, or they will not profit you, *Heb. 4. 2.* You let them go, tho' you remember them never so well, if you let go the belief of them, and the profession of your faith concerning them: it is by a hand of Faith that you take hold of them, and keep hold. You must hold them fast *in Faith*, that is,

1. You must give a firm assent to them as faithful sayings. You must *set to your seal that God is true*; and every word of his is so, even that which you cannot comprehend the mystery of; as the eternity of God, the immensity of all his perfections, the trinity, the incarnation of the Son of God, the operations of the Spirit upon the soul of man, and the like; yet because they are things which God has revealed, you must subscribe to the truth

truth of ; if you do not, you make God a liar, and do in effect make yourselves wiser than God, when you say, *how can this be ?* Whereas you should say, *Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.*

2. You must grow up to a full assurance of the undeniable truth, and uncontestable evidence of these sound words. Pass on towards perfection ; acquaint yourselves with the *Confirming Catechism*. Know not only *what* it is we believe, but *why* we believe it ; and be ready always to *give a reason of the hope that is in you*, 1 Pet. 3. 15. Solomon had this view in instructing his son, *that I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth*, Prov. 22. 21. that thou mayest be convinced that they are words of truth, and receive them accordingly. And Luke the evangelist had the same design in writing his gospel, and inscribing it to his friend *Theophilus*, who probably had been his pupil ; *that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed*, Luke 1. 4. this is holding it fast in Faith.

3. You must make a faithful application of these sound and healing words to yourselves ; else they will not answer the end, or be healing to you, any more than food not eaten, physick not taken, or a plaister not applied. Of the word of Christ you must say, not only this is true, but this is true concerning *me*. He loved *me*, and gave himself for *me* ; to save *me*, not in my sins, but from them : and to purify *me* to himself, and make *me* zealous of good works. *Hear it and know it for thy good*, saith *Eliphaz* to *Job*, Job. 5. 27. in the margin it is *for thyself*. Then only we know it for our good, when we know it for ourselves.

Thirdly, You must hold it fast *in love* : that is the other arm with which these forms of sound words must be embraced, and held, that we may not let them go.

1. You

1. You must take delight in them, and in the knowledge of them. That which we love we will hold fast, and not easily part with. It is not enough for us to *know* the truth, but we must *love* it. It is not enough that we receive it as a *faithful saying*, but also as well *worthy of all acceptation*. We must not only give it credit as *true* news, but bid it welcome as *good* news, and rejoice in it. When Christ saith, *surely I come quickly*, we must not only say *even so*, so it is, he will come, but *amen*, so be it, come Lord Jesus, *Rev.* 22. 20. This wisdom, this knowledge must so *enter into thy heart*, as to become *pleasant to thy soul*, *Prov.* 2. 10. They say it was a ceremony used of old by the *Jews*, when they sent their children to school, to give them a piece of a honeycomb to eat, repeating those words of *Solomon*, *Prov.* 24. 13, 14. *My son, eat thou honey because it is good, and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste; so shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul, when thou hast found it.* That which is not thus delighted in, will not be long held fast.

2. You must be affected with them, and lay them to heart, as things that concern you to the last degree. Love is the leading affection, and rules the rest: As that goes all the rest move. Be affected with love to the good word of God, and then you will conceive a high value and veneration for Christ, and a rooted antipathy to sin, a holy contempt of the world, a deep concern for your own souls, and a care about your everlasting state, and all other good affections, that will be the principles of a steady and regular motion of the soul heavenwards. Then you will hold fast this form of sound words, when it makes such impressions as these upon you; when it *sinks down into your hearts*, *Luke* 9. 44. as Christ's sayings ought to do, and impresseth a weight and stamp upon them.

3. You

3. You must be influenced by them, and act under the commanding power of them. That love in which the sound words must be held fast, is here put for all that evangelical obedience of which holy love is the principle; for as *Faith works by love*, so love works by *keeping the commandments of God*; for this is the love of God, that we *keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous*, 1. John 5. 3. We then hold fast the sayings of Christ, when we hold to them in the constant temper of our minds, and tenor of our lives, and govern ourselves by them in all we say or do; that we may thus adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.

Fourthly, There is one word more in the text to be touched upon, and it is the centre and crown of all: this faith and love, must be *in Christ Jesus*. Blessed *Paul* was full of Blessed *Jesus*, he breathes nothing so much as Christ; he is his Alpha and Omega, and must be ours; it is the token in every epistle. We must hold fast the sound words of the gospel in that faith and love which has Christ for its author, its object, and its end.

1. Which has Christ for its author; that faith and love which is wrought in us, not by the strength of any natural reasonings or resolutions of our own, but by the spirit and grace of Christ, darting rays of a divine light into the understanding, and striking sparks of a divine fire into the affections, for these are not of ourselves, they are the gift of God. Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ *Jesus*, 2 *Tim.* 2. 1. for on him is our help laid, and in him only is our help found. Depend not upon any ability of your own, lean not to your own understanding, but go forth and go on; take hold and keep hold in Christ's strength.

2. Which has Christ for its object: that faith and love in which the truths of the gospel must be held fast, as it must flow from Christ, so it must fasten

fasten on him. It is Christ in the gospel that we must embrace, and hold fast, who is the true *treasure hid in that field*, which we must think it worth while to part with all we have for the purchase of. It is by faith in Christ, and love to Christ, that we must hold fast what we have received: therefore we must embrace these sound words, because we find so much of Christ in them. He is that golden thread that runs through the web of the whole gospel. St. *Austin* somewhere saith of himself, that before his conversion, he took great delight in reading the writings of *Tully* the Roman orator; "but *now* (saith he) I cannot relish them " at all, as I used to do, because I find nothing " of Christ in them."

3. Which hath Christ for its end: it must be that faith and love which has an eye to Christ, which has this always in view, to glorify Christ, and to be glorified with Christ: that faith which presseth towards its own perfection, in the immediate sight of Christ, and that love which presseth towards its own perfection in the everlasting enjoyment of him.

A P P L I C A T I O N.

Let me now close with a few words of exhortation, in reference to the forms of sound words.

1. Let us bless God that our lot is cast in a land of light, that he who determines the times before appointed, and the bounds of mens habitations, has determined ours so well, and so much to our advantage, that those statutes and judgments, which the heathen have not known, are revealed to us. We can never be enough thankful to God for this distinguishing favour, his manifesting himself to us, so as not unto the world. *Blessed are our eyes, for they see the joyful light, and our ears, for they hear the*
the

the joyful sound, which many prophets and kings desired to see, desired to hear, and might not. We can never be enough thankful to God for it, that living in a Christian nation we have bibles; in a Protestant nation we have them in a language we understand; that *to us are committed the oracles of God*, the lively oracles, with more advantage than to the *Jews* of old: that *with us are the priests, the Lord's ministers*, sounding with his trumpets: so many and so great are our privileges, above most other nations, that it may justly be expected, I wish it could be as justly said, *surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people*, Deut. 4. 6.

2. Let us particularly be thankful to God, for the forms of sound words, both ancient and modern, we have among us: for our Catechisms and Confessions of Faith, that we have plenty of them, and variety of them, not clashing and contradicting each other, but rather confirming and illustrating each other, for to Christ they all with one consent bear witness, and to the law and to the testimony they all appeal: though the methods be different, they meet in the same centre, and tend to direct those of different tastes and capacities to it likewise.

3. Let parents and governors of families make conscience of instructing their children and servants in the forms of sound words. Here this work must begin, for it must begin betimes. *Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine?* The prophet there answers, *them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts*, Isa. 28. 9. when they are very young, under the immediate care of their mothers or grandmothers, as *Timothy* was: they are the *teachers of babes*, Rom. 2. 20. When *Solomon* was tender, and only beloved in the sight of his mother, she taught him, Prov. 4. 3. 31. 1. The history of the Scripture is most proper to acquaint your children with in the

first place. We see how soon they apprehend, and are affected with other stories; and why may not impressions be made upon them as soon by the scripture stories. Pleasant and profitable instructions may also be given to children by the singing psalms, and by divine poems and verses suited to their capacity.

It will be of great use likewise to your children, to be told betimes what it is supposed natural for them to ask, *What we mean by this* and the other religious *service*, Exod. 12. 26. Tell them why you read the Bible with so much veneration, because it is the book of God, and holy men wrote the several parts of it, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Tell them why you make conscience of praying to God so solemnly every day, because you have a necessary and constant dependance upon God, and upon his providence and grace, that you are daily receiving mercy from him, and daily need his favour. Tell them why you observe the Lord's day, and make such a difference between that and other days, that it is in remembrance of the creation of the world, the resurrection of Christ, and the pouring out of the Spirit. Especially tell them of their baptism; take all opportunities to let them see children baptized, (in order to which it is very good to have it done publicly); and tell them, thus they were baptized in their infancy, and by that solemnity dedicated and devoted to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and what was done for them then, they must now do for themselves. Tell them of the corruption of their nature, which needed cleansing, and of the grace of God in Christ, in which there is a cleansing virtue.

Set them to learn their catechism; let them commit some portions of Scripture to memory, as you find they are able to do it, and examine them what they can remember of the sermons they hear. You will

will meet with some difficulty herein from the corruption of their nature, which you must endeavour to get over as much as may be by a gentle hand. Give them instruction with all possible freedom and familiarity, with compassion and condescension to their capacity: those teach these things most diligently to their children, not that take the greatest state in doing it, and make the greatest noise, but that talk of them frequently when they *sit in the house*, and *walk by the way*, *when they lie down*, and *when they rise up*, Deut. 6. 7. frequently dropping good instructions among their children, and if but one in ten insensibly slip into their minds, and fasten there, what good proficients may we hope they will be in time. Contrive how to make this work as much as may be a pleasure and delight to your children and servants, and not a task, or a terror, or a drudgery. Teach them as Christ teacheth, who is *meek and lowly in heart*.

4. Let the ministers of Christ look upon themselves as under a charge to *feed the lambs* of Christ's flock. All the reformed churches make this a part of their work, to be done either publicly or privately, either in their solemn religious assemblies, or in meetings on purpose for this work, or in visiting their families, either by themselves, or (as in some churches abroad) by some other proper persons qualified for, and deputed to, this service particularly. Private catechizing has the advantage of a more particular application to the persons catechized: public catechizing has the advantage of a more general edification, and therefore both should be used in their season, or that which, all circumstances considered, may turn to the best account.

O that we who are ministers, were filled with a zeal for the spiritual welfare and eternal salvation of young people, and a concern for the rising ge-

neration; and to do to the utmost of our ability and opportunity to fill the minds of young ones in their early days with the knowledge of Christ, and to fix them for Christ, that the next generation may be better than this! And O that those who are employed in public catechizing, may see of the travel of their souls to their satisfaction, and not labour in vain!

5. Let us look with pity upon the great numbers of children, even in our own land, that are not taught these forms of sound words; but are bred up in ignorance and prophaneness, strangers and enemies to Christ and true christianity: *They are poor, they are foolish, they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God; Jer. 5. 4.* they sit in darkness in a land of light, and walk on in darkness; and if infinite mercy do not interpose to prevent, they are hastening into utter darkness: if you can do any thing, Sirs, have compassion upon them and help them. Pick up some of those neglected abandoned young ones, you that are of ability, and rescue them from ruin, by putting them into a way of receiving instruction. We have charity schools set up in the city and country, which, if managed by the rules of catholic christianity, have a direct tendency to the bettering of the world, and the reforming of the next age, if the reforming of this should be despaired of. What is given to the support and encouragement of them, is charity, both to soul and body, and will be fruit abounding to your account.

6. Let those that have heard and learned the forms of sound words long ago, retain them still, and improve more and more. I have reason to think I speak to many that were blessed with a good education, were trained up in the way wherein they should go; I beseech you examine yourselves, not only whether you have not departed from it;

(I hope you have not quite deserted it) but what progress have you made in it? What have you built upon that foundation? Has it been wood, hay, and stubble, airy notions, nice speculations, perverse disputings, and strifes of words; or has it been gold, silver, and precious stones: 1 Cor. 3. 12. advances in serious godliness, in holiness, and heavenly mindedness, and the power of that *kingdom of God, which is not meat or drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost?* Rom. 14. 17. Go on and prosper, for the Lord is with you. But if you have in any degree let go that good thing which was committed to your trust, I beseech you bethink yourselves whence you have fallen, and *remember again what you have received, and heard, and hold fast, and repent. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die,* Rev. 3. 2, 3.

7. I must not part without a word to you, whose request brought me to this service here to-day; you that are catechized in the principles of religion, that you may grow yet more and more in the knowledge of Christ and christianity.

1.) Carefully attend to the instructions that are given you, and treasure them up, with sincerity, and all the marks of reverence and seriousness. Give attendance on, and attention to what is taught you, and set your heart to it. You must take pains, else you cannot expect to reap advantage, for it is *in labour that there is profit.* Be careful to mark what is said, not critical, to make remarks upon it; and give account of it with affection, but without affectation; and attend here, not for ostentation, because you think yourselves better than others, but for your edification, because you would be better than you are.

2.) Pray over what is taught you, and beg of God to bless it to you. Man can but teach the

outward ear, it is God only that can bring it to the heart, and in that respect *none teacheth like him*. It is he that teacheth with a strong hand, and then the teaching is effectual: he seals the instruction, and then it is abiding: he gives the understanding, and opens the heart: *Isa. 8. 11. Job 33. 16.* Look up to him therefore by faithful and fervent prayer, for that grace of his which is necessary to your profiting by the means of grace. You crave his blessing upon the food for your body, that it may be nourishing to you; and can you expect your spiritual food should nourish you without that blessing, or that you should have that blessing if you do not pray for it? that good thing which is by the word committed to you to keep for God, do you by prayer commit to God to keep for you, and bring it to your minds when you should use it.

3.) Live as those who by your attendance on such an exercise as this, make a profession of religion above many others. Hereby you seem to be more solicitous about your souls, and more inquisitive concerning the way to heaven, than your neighbours; but what will it avail you that you seem to be so, unless you be really so? the *tree* will be *known by its fruits*. Evidence that you receive not so much instruction in vain, by the exemplary purity and piety, seriousness and strictness of your whole conversation. By your justice and charity, and unshaken veracity and fidelity; your sobriety and temperance, your humility and meekness, your conscientious obedience to your parents and masters, and a steady course of godliness and honesty, you ought to *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour*. *Epictetus* pressing his pupil to shew by his practice of virtue, his profiting by the instructions given him, illustrates it by this similitude: "the sheep, saith he, do not come to their shepherd, and shew him how much meat they have

have eaten, but they make it to appear by their growing fatter and fitter for use." Thus therefore do you make it appear that you improve in christian knowledge, by the agreeableness and evenness of your christian practice, and your perseverance in it to the end, that you and we may *rejoice in the day of the Lord, that we have not run in vain, nor laboured in vain.*

S E R M O N IV.

Sober-mindedness recommended to Young People.

TITUS II. 6.

Young Men likewise exhort to be sober-minded.

PAUL the aged is here directing *Titus* a young minister, whom he calls his own son in the common faith, what subjects to preach upon; in the choice of which ministers have need of wisdom. In general, he must *speake the things which become sound doctrine*, v. 1. He must preach the *doctrine of Christ*, the truth as it is in Jesus, the great *mystery of Godliness*; that sound or wholesome doctrine, which is *good for food*, spiritual food, with which souls are *nourished up*, and good for medicine too: it is healing doctrine, as it speaks pardon of sin to those that complain of the terror of guilt, and promiseth power against sin to those that complain of the strength of corruption. Blessed

be God, this sound, this healing doctrine is preached to you.

But this is not all, he must speak other things which become this sound doctrine, opposed to those *Jewish fables and commandments of men* with which they of the circumcision corrupted the doctrine of Christ, chap. 1. 10, 14. The best way to guard against them, will be to preach the duties of christianity with the doctrines of it; the *truth which is after godliness*, chap. 1. 1. Practical religion which regulates and governs the heart and life, is that which becomes the doctrine of christianity; which it becomes the teachers of that doctrine to preach, and both they and the professors of that doctrine to make conscience of. *The grace of God that brings salvation teacheth us*, and therefore the ministers of the word of that grace must teach you, and all that hope for that salvation must learn, to *deny ungodliness, and worldly fleshly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly*. Right notions will not serve without good morals. Young people's saying their catechism, if it were the best in the world, and saying it never so well, will not save them, if the temper of their minds, and the tenor of their conversation be not agreeable to the sound doctrine they converse with, of a piece with it, and such as becomes it.

Titus is here particularly directed to preach upon the duties required from christians of each sex, and each age of life. He must teach *aged men* how they ought to carry themselves, so as that their *hoary head* being found in the way of righteousness, might be a crown of glory to them, ver. 2. And the *aged women* likewise, v. 3. that they may teach the *young women*, v. 4. And here in my text, he is directed what application to make to *Young Men*. Thus particular should ministers be in their preaching, that they may, as far as may be, reach every

every one's case, which is the likeliest way to reach every one's conscience. Thus ministers must endeavour rightly to divide the word of truth, and as wise and faithful stewards in God's house to give every one their portion of meat in due season. And oh that every one would take their portion, and feed upon it, and digest it, and instead of saying, "this was for such a one," would learn to say, "This is for *me*."—In dealing with young men,

1. He is here directed to *exhort them*; ἐξορταζει. He must instruct them what to do, that they might know their duty; he must put them in mind of it when they had occasion to do it; he must excite and stir them up to it, and urge it upon them with motives and arguments; and he must encourage them in the doing of it, and comfort them that they may go on in it chearfully. All this is included in the word here used for exhorting them; and there is need of all this, and all little enough; for some are ignorant and need to be taught, others are careless and need to be quickened; some think their duty an indifferent thing, and on such we must press the command which makes it necessary; others think it an impracticable thing, and to such we must preach the grace that makes it easy.

In pressing practical godliness, it is hard to say which is more needful, persuasion or direction; and which will be most serviceable to our end: good rules to shew us what we should do, or good reasons to convince us that it is our duty and interest to do it. Perhaps some stand more in need of the one, others of the other, and the Scripture furnisheth us with abundant matter for both, enough to furnish the man of God for every good word of this kind.

The original word being a compound of καλειω *voco*, might properly be rendered *to call to* or *call upon*;

upon; and that is the work of ministers, to be your monitors. We call to you, we call upon you, frequently, and with importunity, as we see occasion, to mind your duty, and not to trifle in it, to take heed of sin, and not expose yourselves to it. This is the *word behind you*, saying, *This is the way, walk in it, and turn not aside to the right hand or to the left.* Isa. 30. 21.

Titus must exhort them in his public preaching, and in that must chuse out words to reason with them. But this was not enough, he must exhort them in his personal converse with them, must visit them at their houses, and there give them this admonition; must give it in a particular manner to those that he saw needed it. When he was in company with young men he must be giving them good advice, and instead of allowing himself to be vain as they were, endeavour to make them grave as he was.

2. That which he must exhort them to is to be sober-minded. All the law that concerneth them in particular is summed up in this one word, σωφροσύνη. It is a very significant comprehensive word, and has in it a check to all the ill habits and ill courses that are so mischievous and ruining to young people. The word speaks the duty of young *men*, but it is likewise twice used in the directory for young *women*, v. 4. *that they may teach the young women to be sober*, ἵνα σωφρογίζωσι τὰς νέας, that they may sober the young women, may give them such instructions and examples as may help to make them sober; and again, ver. 5. *that they may teach them to be discreet*, σωφρονας, so that it is the duty of young women as well as young men to be sober-minded. It is an exhortation proper for both the sexes of that age; and *I beseech you suffer this word of exhortation*; receive it at your peril, for if it come from God it is at your utmost peril to refuse it.

I shall

I shall endeavour to shew you,

I. What this Sober-mindedness is, which young people must be exhorted to. And,

II. What considerations should engage you that are young to be sober-minded; and then, make application.

I. Let us see what it is that we press upon you, when we exhort you to be sober-minded. I shall keep to the original word used in my text, and the various significations of it. It is the same word that is used for the first of the three lessons which the grace of God teacheth us, viz. *to live soberly*, ver. 12. In another place it is put last of three excellent christian graces. God hath given us the spirit of power, and of love, and σωφρόνισμός of a sound mind, 2 Tim. 1. 7. And σωφρόνισμός is put by *Plutarch* in general, for the education of youth; the sobering of them. Give this exhortation its full latitude, and it speaks to you that are young these nine things.

1. You must be considerate and thoughtful, and not rash and heedless.

To be sober-minded, is to make use of our reason, in reasoning with ourselves, and in communing with our own hearts, to employ those noble powers and capacities, by which we are distinguished from and dignified above the beasts, for those great ends for which we were endued with them, that we may not receive the grace of God in them in vain, but being rational creatures, may act rationally. You learned to talk when you were children, when will you learn to think? to think seriously, to think to the purpose? Floating thoughts your heads are full of, foreign and impertinent ones; when will you be brought to close and fixed thoughts? to think with concern and application of the great things that belong to your everlasting peace and welfare? A deep concern about the soul and another world, if it once prevail, will effectually fix the thoughts, and to the best

purpose ; for when once you come to see the greatness of that God with whom you have to do, and the weight of that eternity you are standing upon the brink of, you will see it is time to think ; high time to look about you.

Learn to think not only of what is just before you, which strikes the senses, and affects the imagination, but of the causes and consequences, and reasons of things ; to discover truths, compare them with one another, argue upon them, and apply them to yourselves. Multitudes are undone because they are unthinking. Inconsideration is the ruin of thousands, and many a precious soul perisheth through mere carelessness. *Now therefore, thus saith the Lord of Hosts, consider your ways.* Retire into your own souls ; begin an acquaintance with them. It will be the most profitable acquaintance you can fall into, and will turn to the best account. While you are coveting to see the world, and to be acquainted with it, be not strangers at home. Take time to think. Desire to be alone now and then, and let not solitude and retirement be an uneasiness to you, for you have a heart of your own that you may find talk with, and a God nigh unto you, with whom you may have a pleasing communion. Learn to think *freely*. God invites you to do so. *Come now and let us reason together.* We desire not you should take things upon trust, but enquire impartially into them, as the noble Bereans, who searched the *Scriptures daily, whether those things were so* which the apostles told them. Pure christianity and serious godliness fear not the scrutiny of a free thought, but despise the impotent malice of a prejudiced one. There are those, who under the pretence of being *Free-thinkers*, by sly insinuations endeavour to shock young people's belief of the divine authority of the *Scriptures*, and undermine all revealed religion, by
turning

turning sacred things into jest and ridicule: but they usurp the honourable character of *Free-thinkers*; it doth not belong to them; for it is certain, pride and affectation of singularity, and a spirit of opposition and contradiction, do as much enslave the thoughts on the one hand, as an implicit faith and obedience on the other hand. *While they promise men liberty*, they do but deceive them, and under colour of being sole masters of reason, and ridiculing all that agree not with them, they as arbitrarily impose upon men's credulity as ever popes and councils did under colour of being sole masters of faith, and anathematizing all that differ from them.

Learn to think for yourselves; to think of yourselves, and to think with application. Think what you are, and what you are capable of; think who made you, and what you were made for; for what end you were endued with the powers of reason, and attended by the inferior creatures. Think what you have been doing since you came into the world, of the great work you were sent into the world about: of the *vanity of childhood and youth*, and how unavoidably the years of them are *past away as a tale that is told*, and whether therefore it be not high time for the youngest of you to begin to be religious, and to *enter in at the strait gate*.

As to your particular actions, do not walk at all adventures, as those do that *despise their own ways*; but consider what you do before you do it, that you may not have occasion to repent of it afterwards. Do nothing rashly, but always speak and act under the government of the great law of consideration. *Ponder the path of your feet*, that it may be a strait path.

Some people take a pride in being careless. Tell them of such and such a thing that they were warned about, they turn it off with this excuse,
that

that for their parts they never heed, they mind not what is said to them, nor ever thought of it since; and so *glory in their shame*. But be not you thus negligent; for then, and not till then, there begins to be hopes of young people, when they begin to *set their hearts to all these things that are testified* unto them, and to think of them with the reason of men, and the concern they deserve.

2. You must be cautious and prudent, and not wilful and heady.

The word in the text is the same that is rendered, *v. 5.* to be discreet; *prudenter agere*. You must not only think rationally, but when you have done so, you must act wisely, and so as will be most for your true interest. *Walk circumspectly*, look before you, look about you, look under your feet, and pick your way, *not as fools, but as wise*. David's purpose when he set out in the world was, *I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way*; and his prayer was, *Lord, when wilt thou come unto me?* Psal. 101. 2. Accordingly we find, (1 Sam. 18. 14.) his purpose performed, and his prayer answered, *He behaved himself wisely in all his ways, and the Lord was with him..* Those that govern themselves, God will guide, but will justly leave those that love to wander, to wander endlessly.

Put away childish follies with other childish things, and do not all your days think and speak as children. Espouse principles of wisdom; fix to yourselves rules of wisdom, and be ruled by those rules, and actuated by those principles. It is the *wisdom of the prudent to understand his own way*, his own business, not to censure other people's; and this wisdom will in all cases be profitable to direct what measures, what steps to take.

Youth is apt to be bold and venturous, and therefore resolute and peremptory, to its great prejudice. But be not you so; let reason and conscience,

science, according to the duty of their place, give check to the violence of appetite and passion; let them rectify the mistakes, and over-rule the hasty dictates of humour and fancy, and reduce the arbitrary and exorbitant power of those tyrants. How often doth *Solomon* press it upon the young man he takes under his tuition? *My Son, be wise, Wisdom is the principal thing: therefore get wisdom; get understanding.* You that are launching out into the world must take wisdom to be your pilot, or you are in danger of splitting upon some rock or other; this must be your *pillar of cloud and fire*, which you must follow the conduct of through this wilderness.

Be diffident of your own judgments, and jealous of yourselves, that you do not take things right, or not take them intire, and for that reason be afraid lest the resolutions which are the result of your considerations, should prove wrong, and therefore leave room for second thoughts. Say not, "I will do so and so, I am resolved I will, whatever may be said to the contrary; I will walk in the way of my heart, and in the sight of my eyes, whatever it cost me." Never have any will, but what is guided by wisdom. And therefore in every case of moment and difficulty, be willing to be advised by your friends, and depend more upon their judgment, who have had longer experience of the world, than upon your own. Consult with those that are wise and good; ask them what they would do, if they were in your case; and you will find that *in a multitude of counsellors there is safety*, and that oftentimes proves best which was least your own doing; or if it should not prove well, it will be a satisfaction to you that you did not do it without advice, and mature deliberation.

What brighter character can be given of a young man, than to say he is wise? or what blacker,
than

than to say he is wilful? See the former in *Solomon*, who calls himself a child, that knows not how to go out or to come in, *1 Kings* 3. 7. and yet his father calls him a wise man, that knows what he has to do. See the latter in the character of the rebellious son that was to be stoned to death, against whom the indictment runs thus: He is *stubborn*, he *will not obey the voice of his father and mother*, *Deut.* 21. 18, 20. Those are the fools of whom there is little hope, that *despise wisdom and instruction*, *Prov.* 1. 7. He that will not be counselled, cannot be helped.

But would you be wise? Not only be thought so, but really be so. Study the scriptures; by them you will get more understanding than the ancients, or than all your teachers, *Psal.* 119. 99, 100. Make your observations upon the carriage and miscarriage of others, that you may take pattern by those that do well, and take warning by those that do ill; look upon both and receive instruction. But especially be earnest with God in prayer for wisdom, as *Solomon* was, whose prayer was both pleasing and prevailing in heaven. *2 Chr.* 1. 10. 12. *If any man*, if any young man *lack wisdom*, and is sensible that he lacks it, he is directed what to do; *let him ask it of God*; and he is encouraged to do it, for the Lord giveth wisdom; he has it to give, he delights to give it, he gives liberally. He has a particular eye to young people in the dispensing of this gift, for his word was written to *give to the young man knowledge and discretion*, *Prov.* 1. 4. And because some that are willing to be counselled, yet do not care to be chidden, we are told that he gives, and *upbraids not*. Yet as if this were not encouragement enough to the beggars at wisdom's gates, there is an express promise to every one that seeks aright, that he shall not seek in vain. It is not a
promise

promise with a peradventure, but with the greatest assurance, *it shall be given him*, James 1. 5. To all true believers, Christ himself is and shall be *made of God wisdom*, 1 Cor. 1. 30.

3. You must be humble and modest, and not proud and conceited.

The word signifies *modesté se gerere*. Σωφροσύνην ἐκάλει τὴν ταπεινοφροσύνην. So *Chrysostom*, *Hom. ad Rom.* Sober-mindedness is the same with lowly-mindedness. And *Theodoret* makes it the same with that poverty of spirit, on which Christ pronounceth his first blessing, *Matt.* 5. 3. It is recommended to the younger to be clothed with humility, 1 *Pet.* 5. 5. that is being sober-minded.

It is an observation I have made upon that little acquaintance I have had with the world, that I have seen more young people ruined by pride, than perhaps by any one lust whatsoever; and therefore let me press this upon you with all earnestness: and it is a caution introduced with more than ordinary solemnity, *Rom.* 12. 3. *I say, through the grace given unto me, unto every man that is among you, that no man think of himself above what he ought to think, but think soberly.* There is an elegant paronomasia in the original, which for the sake of the young scholars, I beg leave to take notice of, μὴ ὑπερφρογεῖν παρ' ὃ δεῖ φρογεῖν, ἀλλὰ φρογεῖν εἰς τὸ σωφρογεῖν; let him think *unto Sobriety*, the word used in the text: let him think himself into a sober mind, and always keep in that good mind.

Keep up low thoughts of yourselves, of your endowments, both outward and inward, of your attainments and improvements, and all your performances, and all the things you call merits and excellencies. *Boast not of a false gift*, of what you have not, nor be puffed up with what you have. What there is in you that is commendable, wink at it yourselves, as most people do at their own

faults, and diminish it; and look much at that in others which is more commendable. Let not the handsome glory in their beauty, nor the ingenious in their wit; for there cannot be a greater allay to the glory, than to have it said, "such and such are comely and witty, but they know it." *Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone*; and as soon as he perceived it, he *put a veil* upon it. Delight more to say and do what is praise-worthy, than to be praised for it; for *what hast thou which thou hast not received?* And what hast thou received which thou hast not abused? Why then dost thou boast?

Keep up a quick and constant sense of your own manifold defects and infirmities; how much there is in you, and how much is said and done by you every day, which you have reason to be ashamed of, and humbled for: in how many things you come short of others, and in how many more you come short of the rule. You will find no reason to be proud of what you know, when you see how much you are ignorant of, nor of what you do that is good, when you see how much you do amiss. Dwell much upon humbling considerations, and those that tend to take down your high opinions of yourselves; and keep up a humble sense of your necessary and constant dependance upon Christ and his grace, without which you are nothing, and will soon be worse than nothing.

Think not yourselves too wise, too good, too old to be reproved for what is amiss, and to be taught to do better. When you are double and treble the age you are, yet you will not be too old to learn, and increase in learning. *If any man think that he knows any thing, that he knows every thing, so as that he needs no more instruction, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know it, 1 Cor. 8. 2.* And therefore he that seems to be wise, (seems so to himself, seems so to others,) let him become a fool,

fool, that he may be wise; let him be sensible of his own folly, that he may be quickened to use the means of wisdom, and prepared to receive the grace of wisdom, 1 Cor. 3. 18.

Be not confident of your own judgment, nor opinionative, nor look upon those with contempt that do not think as you do. *Elibu* is a great example of humility and modesty to those of your age. He was swift to hear, and very ambitious to learn, for it is the learning age: *I am young, and you are old*, and therefore *I waited for your words, I gave ear to your reasons, I attended unto you*, ready to give what you said its due weight, and expecting to hear something that I had not known before; but he was *slow to speak*: *I was afraid, and durst not shew you my opinion, for I said, days should speak*, Job 32. 6, 7, 11, 12. Be not forward to say, "I hold so and so," for (as a grave divine once told a novice, that was laying down the law with great assurance) "It best becomes you to hold your peace."

Take heed of thinking yourselves above your business. You that are apprentices, think not yourselves above your service; humility will make the yoke you are under, easy to you, which will gall the proud and stiff neck. You that are set up for yourselves, think it no disparagement to you to confine yourselves to your business, and to make a business of it; to see to it with your own eyes; no nor to put your own hands to it. Be ashamed of nothing but sin. *Ἐργον ἁμάρτιαν οὐκ ἐσθλόν*.

It will be yet much worse, if you think yourselves above your religion; above the restraints of it, as if it were a thing below you to be afraid of sin, and to make conscience of your words and actions; whereas there cannot be a greater disgrace to you than loose walking. Nor above the exercises of religion, as if it were a thing below you

to pray and hear the word, and join in acts of devotion, for it is really the greatest honour you can do yourselves thus to honour God. Let this branch of sober-mindedness appear in your looks and carriage. Let the shew of your countenances witness for you, that you are not confident and conceited, but that you keep up a due diffidence of yourselves, and a due deference to all about you, especially those above you. Be not pert in your carriage, nor fantastical in your dress. If there be any thing in the garb and carriage, which young people may be innocently proud of, because those about them will be justly pleased with it, it is the gravity of it, when it is an indication of humility and modesty reigning in the heart; for those are the best ornaments, and *in the sight of God*, and all wise men, they are *of great price*. You will find, that *better it is to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud*; for when *men's pride shall bring them low, honour shall uphold the humble in spirit*; and they shall be upheld, borne up, and borne out, in that honour.

4. You must be temperate and self-denying, and not indulgent of your appetites. It is the same word in the text, that v. 2. is translated temperate, and is one of the lessons that the aged men must learn. Some think it properly signifies a moderate use of meat and drink; so as to keep the mean, and in the use of them, *σθεὺν τὴν φρήνιν*, or *τὴν φροσύνην*, to save our mind from being clouded, and our wisdom from being corrupted, that is, our hearts from being overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness. We commonly put a sober man, in opposition to one that is drunk, or addicted to drunkenness. Let me therefore warn young men to dread the sin of drunkenness; keep at a distance from it, avoid all appearances of it, and approaches towards it. It has *slain its thousands, its ten thousands*

sands of young people; has ruined their health, brought diseases upon them, and cut them off in the flower of their days. How many fall unpitied sacrifices to this base lust! It has ruined their estates and trades, at their first setting out; when the time that should have been spent in the shop and warehouse is spent in the tavern and alehouse; when the money they should buy goods with, and pay their debts with, is thrown away in the gratification of an inordinate love of wine and strong drink, no wonder if they soon break and run their country.

Take heed of the *beginnings* of this sin, for the way of it is down-hill; and many under pretence of an innocent entertainment, and passing the evening in a pleasant conversation, are drawn in to drink to excess, and make beasts of themselves. You should tremble to think how fatal the consequences of it are; how unfit it renders you for the service of God at night, yea, and for your own business the next morning; how many are thus besotted, and sunk into that drowsiness, which cloaths a man with rags: and yet that is not the worst, it extinguishes convictions, and sparks of devotion, provokes the spirit of grace to withdraw, and it will be the sinners eternal ruin if it be not repented of, and forsaken in time; for the word of God hath said it, and it cannot be gainsaid, that *drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Look not then upon the wine when it is red, when it gives its colour in the cup; is charming, and tempting; be not overcome by its allurements, for *at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder.* If you saw the devil putting the cup of drunkenness into your hand, I dare say, you would not take it out of his. You may be sure the temptation to it comes from him, and therefore ought to dread it as much as if you saw it. If you saw poi-

son put into the glass you would not drink it; and if it be provoking to God, and ruining to your souls, it is worse than poison: there is worse than death, there's hell in the cup, and will you not then refuse it?

How many ways may you spend your evening, when you are fatigued with the business of the day, better than in drinking. I am sorry we cannot urge against you, so much as gladly we would, the *scandal* of it, as it is grown so fashionable. But whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear, we will insist upon the *sin* of it, and its prejudice to the soul both here and forever, and beg of you in consideration of this to frighten yourselves from it. We will insist likewise upon the real disgrace that it is to a reasonable creature, who is hereby spoiled of his crown, and levelled with the brutes, and beg of you in consideration of this to shame yourselves out of it before God and your own conscience.

It is a sin that is in a special manner shameful and hurtful to those who profess religion. You that have been well educated, that have been bred up in sober families, have had examples of sobriety set you, and have known what the honours and pleasures of a sober conversation are; if when you set up for yourselves, you think yourselves happy in getting clear from the restraints of a sober regimen, and take the liberty of the drunkards, what a reproach will it be to you! what a degeneracy! what a fall from your first love! and where will it stop? Perhaps you have given up your names to the Lord Jesus at his table, and dare you *partake of the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils*? Let christians that are made to our God *kings and priests*, take to themselves the lesson which *Solomon's* mother taught him, *It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings*, so it is not for christians, *to drink wine,*
but

but with great moderation, *lest they drink and forget the law*, forget the gospel, *Prov. 31. 4, 5.*

Yet this is not all I have to warn you against under this head. Let not young people be nice and curious in their *diets*, nor solicitous to have all the delights of sense wound up to the height of pleasurable-ness. Be *not desirous of dainties, for they are deceitful meat*, *Prov. 23. 3.* It is true, the use of them is lawful, but it is as true, that the love of them is dangerous; and the indulging of the appetites of the body to them is oft prejudicial to the soul, and its true interests. Learn betimes to relish the delights that are rational and spiritual, and then your mouths will be out of taste to those pleasures that are brutal, and belong only to the animal life; and be afraid lest by indulging the body and the lusts of it, you come by degrees to the black character of those that were φιλόδονοι μᾶλλον ἢ φιλόθεοι, *Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God*, *2 Tim. 3. 4.*

The body is made to be a servant to the soul, and it must be treated accordingly; we must give it, as we must to our servants, that which is *just and equal*. Let it have what is fitting; but let it not be suffered to domineer, for nothing is so insufferable as a *servant when he reigneth*, *Prov. 30. 22.* Nor let it be pampered, for he that *delicately bringeth up his servant from a child, shall have him become his son at the length*, *Prov. 29. 21.* Be dead therefore to the delights of sense; mortify the love of ease and pleasure; learn betimes to *endure hardness*; use yourselves to *deny yourselves*, and so you will make it easy to yourselves, and will the better bear the common calamities of human life, as well as sufferings for righteousness sake. Those that would approve themselves good soldiers of Jesus Christ, must endure hardness, must inure themselves to it, *2 Tim. 2. 3.*

5. You must be mild and gentle, and not indulgent of your passions. The word here used signifies *moderation*; such a soundness of mind as is opposed to frenzy and violence. We have need of sobriety to restrain and repress not only our inordinate appetites towards those things that are pleasing to sense, but our irregular resentment of those things that are displeasing; for such a vexatious knowledge of good and evil has mankind got by eating of the forbidden tree. Young people are especially apt to be hot and furious, to resent injuries, and to study revenge, like *Simeon* and *Levi*, whose anger was cursed, for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel; and therefore the passion is ungoverned, because the pride is unmortified. They are fond of liberty, and therefore cannot bear controul, and wedded to their own opinion, and therefore cannot bear contradiction, but are all in a flame presently, if any one crosses them; and reckon that an honour which is really their shame, to lay the reins on the neck of their passions, not caring what indecencies they are transported into by them, nor considering how mischievous the consequences may be.

Learn betimes to bridle your anger; to guard against the sparks of provocation, that they may not fall into the tinder; or if the fire be kindled, put it out presently, by commanding the peace in your own souls, and *setting a watch before the door of your lips*. And when at any time you are affronted, or think yourselves so, aim not at the wit of a sharp answer, which will *stir up anger*, but at the wisdom and grace of a *soft answer*, which will *turn away wrath*, Prov. 15. 1.

You are setting out in the world, and would have your passage through it comfortable. Now there is nothing will contribute more to that than a quiet spirit: *the meek shall inherit the earth*, was God's promise,

promise, by *David* first, *Psal.* 37. 11. and afterwards by the son of *David*, *Matt.* 5. 5. If they possess not an abundance of wealth, yet they shall *delight themselves in the abundance of peace*. By the good government of your passions, you will make yourselves easy, and easy to those about you; and a great deal of mischief both to others and to yourselves will be prevented.

The moral philosophers valued themselves very much upon the power which their instructions had upon young people, to soften and sweeten their temper, and teach them to govern their passions, and keep a strict hand upon them. But christianity, to all the arguments which reason suggests for meekness, adds the authority of the God that made us, forbidding rash anger, as heart-murder; the example of the Lord Jesus Christ that bought us, and bids us learn of him to be *meek and lowly in heart*; and the consolations of the Spirit, which have a direct tendency to make us pleasant to ourselves and others; and our experience of God's mercy and grace in forbearing and forgiving us: and shall this divine and heavenly institution come short of their instructions, in plucking up this root of bitterness, which bears gall and wormwood, and making us *peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated*, which are the bright and blessed characters of the *wisdom from above*! *Jam.* 3. 17.

If you suffer your passions to get head now you are young, they will be in danger of growing more and more headstrong, and of making you perpetually uneasy; but if you get dominion over them now, you will easily keep dominion, and so keep the peace in your hearts and houses, and through the grace of God, it will not be in the power even of sickness or old age to make you peevish, to sour your temper, or embitter your spirits. *Put on therefore among the ornaments of your youth, as the elect*
of

of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness and long-suffering. Your age is made for love; let holy love therefore be a law to you.

P A R T II.

The next thing to be mentioned, as included in Sober-mindedness, is,

6. You must be chaste and reserved and not wanton and impure. Both the Greek Fathers and philosophers use the word σωφροσύνη, for chastity. *Continentiam & castitatem significat, Isidore Pelus.* When it is made the particular duty of young men, this signification of the word must certainly be taken in; for the *lusts of the flesh, which are manifest, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and lasciviousness*, are particularly called *youthful lusts*. Against these, in Christ's name, I am here to warn all you that are young! For God's sake, and for your own precious soul's sake, flee these youthful lusts. Dread them as you would a devouring fire, or a destroying plague, and keep at a distance from them: abstain from all appearances of these sins; *bating even the garment spotted with the flesh*, even the attire of an harlot. Covet not to know these depths of Satan, but take a pride in being ignorant of the way of the adulterous woman. See all temptations to uncleanness as coming from the unclean spirit, that roaring lion who goes about continually, thus seeking to devour young people. O that you would betimes conceive a detestation and abhorrence of this sin, as much below you, and more against you; and put on a firm and steady resolution in the strength of the grace of Jesus Christ never to defile yourselves with it; remembering what the apostle prescribes, as that which ought to be the constant care of the unmarried, to *be holy*

both in body and spirit, and so to please the Lord,
1 Cor. 7. 34.

Take heed of the beginnings of this Sin, lest satan in any thing get advantage against you, and the little thief, stolen in insensibly at the window, open the door to the great one. How earnestly doth *Solomon* warn his young man to take heed of the baits, lest he be taken in the snares of the evil woman. *Remove thy way far from her*, saith he, for he that would be kept from harm, must keep out of harm's way: *Come not nigh the door of her house*, but go on the other side of the street, as thou wouldest if it were a house infected; *lest thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, and say, how have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof?* Prov. 5. 8, 11, 12.

Pray earnestly to God for his grace, that it may be sufficient for you, to keep you from this sin; so as that, be the temptation never so sudden, it may find you awake, and aware of it, that you may not be surprized into it; and be it never so strong, it may find you armed against it, with the whole armour of God, that you may not be overpowered, and overcome by it.

Get your hearts purified by the word of God, and sanctified by divine love, for how else shall young people *cleanse their way*, but by *taking heed thereto, according to God's word?* Ps. 119. 9. Keep up the authority of conscience, and keep it always tender, and void of offence. *Make a covenant with your eyes*, that they may not be the inlets of any impure thoughts, or the outlets of any impure desires; and pray *David's* prayer, *Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity*, that you may never look and lust.

Modesty is the hedge of chastity, and it is the ornament of your age, therefore be sure to keep that up. Let your dress and carriage be very
modest,

modest, and such as speaks a chaste conversation coupled with fear. Make it to appear, that you know how to be pleasant and chearful, without transgressing even the strictest rules of modesty; nay, that you know not how to be so, when any thing is said or done against those rules.

I would especially charge you that are young, to take heed that *no corrupt filthy communication proceed out of your mouth*. Never dare to speak, nor delight to hear any thing that is immodest; *fornication and all uncleanness, let it not be once named among you*; it is *foolish talking and jesting which is not convenient*, but very unbecoming the professors of such a pure and undefiled religion as christianity is. It is that evil communication which corrupts good manners; it is, as some think, that *idle word* for which our Saviour saith we must give account in the great day. Think what a great dishonour lascivious talk is to God, what a reproach to yourselves, and what mischief it doth to those you converse with. Think how great a matter a spark of this fire from hell may kindle; and how much of the sin and ruin of souls, you may hereby have to answer for. God turns those to a *pure language*, whom he brings to call upon his name, *Zeph. 3. 9.*

7. You must be staid and composed, and not giddy and unsettled. This we commonly take to be signified by a sober mind, a mind that acts and moves steadily, and is one with itself; in opposition to a roving wandering heart, a heart divided, which cannot but be found faulty. Be sober-minded, that is, let your *hearts be fixed*, *Psal. 108. 1. Stablish your hearts*, and be not like *Reuben, unstable as water*, for those that are so will never excel.

Fix now in the days of your youth for God and Christ, and serious godliness. Fix for heaven as your end, and holiness as your way. *Halt* no longer, *between two*, but be at a point. You have often

often been bid to *chuse whom ye will serve*, stand no longer deliberating, but bring this matter at length to the issue you will abide by, and abide by it, *nay, but we will serve the Lord.*

Fix to that, whatever it is, that you are designed for in the world; fix to your business, fix to your book, if that is to be your business. *Dum quid sis dubitas, jam potes esse nihil.* Whatever it is that you are employed in, let your application to it be close and constant, and do not upon every slight and trivial pretence start aside from it, and say you are weary of it, or you hope to mend yourselves, when the same volatile humour that makes you uneasy in the place and work you are in, will soon make you so in another.

Learn to fix your thoughts, and be not wandering; let them not run from one thing to another, as the bird in wandering, and the swallow in flying, for thus they run at length with the *fools eyes* into *the ends of the earth*; but *what thy hand finds to do*, and thy heart to think of, which is to the purpose, *do it*, and think it, *with all thy might*, and pursue it close, till thou bring it to an issue, and then it is done and thought to purpose indeed. Whatever thou dost, *Hoc age*, mind thy business.

Learn to fix your aims, and act with a single eye; for the *double-minded man*, who is far from being sober-minded, cannot but be *unstable in all his ways*, and turns himself as the wind turns. *He that wavers, is as a wave of the sea*, Jam. 1. 6. 8. Act considerately, that is consistently with yourselves; and as those that understand your own way, and have not your ear open to every whisper and suggestion that would turn you out of it. *Be no more children tossed to and fro with every wind*, enticed to and fro with every bait, Eph. 4. 14. But in understanding *be ye men*, be ye fixed; let your foot
stand

stand in an even place, and then let your hearts be established; be not moved, be not removed.

8. You must be content and easy, and not ambitious and aspiring. Some make the word to signify *animi demissio*, the bringing of the mind down to the condition, when the condition will not in every thing be brought up to the mind. A sober mind is that which accommodates itself to every estate of life and every event of Providence, so that whatever changes happen, it preserves the possession and enjoyment of itself.

You that are young must learn betimes to reconcile yourselves to your lot, and make the best of that which is, because it is the will of God it should be as it is. What pleaseth him ought to please us; for he knows what is fit to be done, and fit for us to have, better than we do. Let this check all disquieting discontented thoughts. *Should it be according to thy mind?* Shalt thou who art but of yesterday control him, quarrel with him, or prescribe to him, whose *counsels* were of *old from everlasting*? It is folly to direct the divine disposals, but wisdom to acquiesce in them.

He who *determineth the times before appointed, and the bounds of mens habitation*, ordered what our rank and station should be in the world, what parents we should be born of, what lot we should be born to, and what our make and capacity of mind and body should be. In these respects there is a great variety ordained by Providence between some and others, who yet are made of one blood. Some are born to wealth and honour, others to poverty and obscurity; some seem made and marked by nature (that is, the God of nature) to be great and considerable, while others seem doomed to be all their days little and low. You see many above you that make a figure in the world, and are likely to do so yet more, while you are but as cyphers; yet do not envy them,

them, nor fret at the place God's providence has put you in, but make yourselves easy in it, and make the best of it, as those who are satisfied not only in general that all is well that God doth, but in particular all is well that he doth with you.

Possess your minds now you are young with a reverence for the Divine Providence; its sovereignty, wisdom and goodness, and bring your minds unto a chearful reference of yourselves to all its arbitrations: *Here I am, let the Lord do with me and all mine affairs as seemeth good in his sight.* This would have a mighty influence upon the conduct of your affairs, and the evenness of your spirits, all your days. Whatever you are dispossessed of, or disturbed in the enjoyment of, resolve to be easy, not because you cannot help it, "This is an evil, and I must bear it;" that is but a poor reason; but because it is the will of God, whose will is his wisdom; "This is an evil, but it is designed for my good, and I will bear it."

Lay your expectations low from this world, and promise not yourselves great matters in it. It is God's command, *Rom. 12. 16. Mind not high things;* set not your eyes and hearts upon them as if they were the best things, and as if they would make you happy, and you could not be happy without them; but condescend to them of low estate, and take pleasure in converse with them, or, as the margin reads it, be content with *mean things*, with a mean habitation, mean diet, mean cloaths, mean employments, if such be your lot; and instead of blaming it, bless God for it that it is not worse, and believe it is fittest for you.

Not that I would have young people mean spirited, or cramped in their aims and endeavours; whatever your business is, strive to be excellent and eminent in it; whatever your substance is, be diligent, that by the blessing of God upon it, it may,
like

like *Job's*, be increased in the land. *A good man leaves an inheritance* honestly got *to his children's children*. But I would not have you ambitious of great things; covet not by *taking thought* to add *cubits* to your stature; let it suffice to thrive by inches, with the increases of the sober-minded, who do not *make haste to be rich*, for "soft and fair goes far."

We commonly say of you that are young, that you are *upon your preferment*; shall I persuade you to reckon it your best preferment to be eminently pious, and serviceable to the glory of God, and the interests of his kingdom in the world? That is the way to have the best reputation among men, which wise men reckon no despicable preferment, for *a good name is better than precious ointment*. Aim at advancing yourselves, not that you may live in so much the more pomp and ease, but that you may be in so much the better capacity to do good, and that is true preferment.

We commonly say of you that are young, that now is your time to *make your fortune*. It is a heathenish expression, for it is not blind fortune, but an all-seeing Providence that we are governed by. But that is not all; it is not in your power to make your own lot, *Every man's judgment proceedeth from the Lord*; every creature is that to you, and no more, than he makes it to be, and therefore you must seek his favour, and reckon your lot best made when you have *the Lord to be the portion of your inheritance and your cup*, and then say, *The lines are fallen to you in pleasant places*. That is best for you which is best for your souls, and in that you must soberly rest satisfied.

Jacob was setting out in the world, and going to take him a wife, when all he desired and aimed at, and if I may so say, indented for in his marriage-articles, was *bread to eat*, and *raiment to put on*, to be

be kept in his way, and brought at length to his father's house in peace; and why should any of the spiritual seed of Jacob look higher in this world, who knows and hopes he has eternal riches in reversion after one life? Let young people be modest and moderate and sober-minded in their desires and expectations of temporal good things, as becomes those who see through them, and look above, and beyond them, to the *things not seen that are eternal*.

9. You must be grave and serious, and not frothy and vain. This signification we commonly give to the word here used. Him that is serious we call a sober man. And I put this last of the ingredients of this sober-mindedness, because it will have a very great influence upon all the rest. We should gain our point intirely with young people, if we could but prevail with them to be serious. It is serious piety we would bring them to, and to live in good earnest.

Not that we would oblige young people never to be merry, or have any ill-natured design upon them to make them melancholy; no, religion allows them to be chearful. It is your time, make your best of it; *evil days will come*, of which you will say you *have no pleasure in them*, when the cares and sorrows of this world increase upon you; and we would not have you to anticipate those evil days. It is mentioned as an instance of the promised prosperity and flourishing state of Jerusalem, that *the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof*, Zech. 8. 5. Nay, religion prescribes chearfulness to all those that are sincere and hearty in it; *go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works*, Eccl. 9. 7. God expects to be served by us with *joyfulness and gladness of heart, in the abundance of all things*, Deut. 28. 47.

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And it is certain, that none have such good reason to be chearful as godly people have; none can be so upon better grounds or with a better grace, so justly or so safely. I have often said, and I must take all occasions to repeat it, "That a holy heavenly life, spent in the service of God, and in communion with him, is without doubt the most pleasant comfortable life any one can live in this world."

But that which I would caution you against under this head, is *vain* and *carnal* mirth, that mirth, that *laughter of the fool*, of which *Solomon* saith, *it is mad*, and *what doth it?* Innocent mirth is of good use in its time and place; it will revive the spirit, and fit you for business. *A merry heart doth good like a medicine*; but then it must be *used like* a medicine, must be taken physically, only when there is occasion for it, and not constantly like our daily bread; and like physic it must be taken *sub regimine*, not too often, nor too much at a time; like opiates, which are taken by drops, and with great caution. When you make use of this medicine, it must be with due correctives, and you must take great care of yourselves, lest that turn to your prejudice, and become a snare and a trap, which was intended for your health and welfare.

Allow yourselves in mirth, as far as will consist with sober-mindedness, and no further. Be merry and wise. Never let your mirth transgress the laws of piety, charity, or modesty, nor intrench upon your time for devotion and the service of God. Wise men will always reckon him over-fond of his mirth, that will "rather lose his friend than his jest;" much more may he be reckoned so, that will rather lose his God and a good conscience. Never make sport with the Scripture and sacred things, but let that which is serious always be spoken of
with

with seriousness; for "it is ill-jesting with edge-tools."

Take heed lest your mirth exceed due bounds, and transport you into any indecencies; that you give not yourselves too great a liberty, and then think to excuse it by saying, *Am not I in sport?* *Prov.* 26. 19. Set a double guard at such a time before the door of your lips, lest you offend with your tongues; and especially keep your hearts with all diligence. Let the inward thought still be serious; and in the midst of your greatest mirth, retain a disposition habitually serious, and a reigning affection to spiritual and divine things; such as will make you indifferent to all vain mirth and pleasure, and set you above it, and enable you to look upon that with a holy contempt, which so many spend so much of their time in with so great a complacency. A serious christian, though to relax himself, and entertain his friends, he may allow himself a little in mirth and recreation, yet he will make it to appear he is not in that as in his element, but he knows better pleasures, and has given them the preference. A believing foretaste of the milk and honey of *Canaan* is enough to put the mouth quite out of taste to the garlick and onions of *Egypt*.

But while I am pressing you that are young to be always serious, what shall we think of those that are never serious; that are always on the merry pin, always jesting, always bantering, so that you never know when they speak in earnest? those that are always in pursuit of some sensual pleasure or other, and never know what it is to be one quarter of an hour serious, from the beginning of the year to the end of it? Certainly they forget that *for all these things God shall bring them into judgment*, and they know not how soon. O that this laughter might be turned into the mourning of true penitents, and

this joy into the heaviness of sincere converts, that it may not be turned, as otherwise it certainly will be, into the weeping and wailing of damned sinners. The same Jesus that said, *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted*, hath said also, *Wo unto you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep*, Luke 6, 26.

Shall I now prevail with you that are young, to value *wisdom* above wit, and that which helps to make you serious above that which helps to make you merry; and to take as much pleasure in gravity, as others do in vanity. It will be the honour of your youth, will arm you against the temptations you are surrounded with, and will not only mark you for something considerable in this world, but for something infinitely more so in the other world. And if you understand yourselves right, I dare say, one hour spent in the employments and enjoyments of a sober, serious mind, will afford you more true comfort in the reflection, than many spent in mirth and gaiety, because it will certainly pass so much better in the account another day.

If you take the world for your guide, you will be bid to laugh and be fat; will be told that an ounce of mirth is worth a pound of sorrow; but if you will attend to the dictates of the word of God, (and it is fit the word that must judge us hereafter should rule us now) that will tell you, that sorrow is better than laughter; and that it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting, for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better; it is made serious.

Thus you see what it is to be sober-minded, and how much of your duty it takes in.

II. Let us see what considerations are proper, and may be powerful to make young people in all these respects sober-minded?

1. You are all reasonable creatures, and therefore ought to be sober-minded. Consider how noble and excellent that rank of beings is that you are of; how far advanced above that of the beasts, and consequently how unjust you are both to God and to yourselves, if by inconsideration, or the indulgence of any brutish appetite or passion, you level yourselves with the beasts that perish. What have you your reason for, if you do not make use of it? What have you your mind for, if you do not take care to keep yourselves of a sound mind; or if you mind not that for the sake of which you had your minds given you. *Shew yourselves men*, therefore, by *bringing to mind*, *O ye transgressors*, Isa. 46. 8. Sinners would become saints, if they would but shew themselves men; for the service of Christ is a *reasonable service*, and those that are wicked are unreasonable men. Be persuaded therefore to act rationally, and to save the nobler powers of reason from being tied up and overpowered by this and the other rebellious lust and passion.

You brought rational souls with you into the world; but think how long the seeds of reason lay buried under the clods, before they began to spring up; how long those sparks of a divine fire seemed lost in the embers, during the years of infancy, when you were not capable of the consideration we are persuading you to. Yet then God took care of you, provided for you, and did you good, when you were not able to do him any service: study therefore, now you are come to the use of reason, what honours shall be done to him, who was then *careful for you with all that care*. Study how you shall redeem the time that was then unavoidably lost, by making so much the more use of your reason now.

Think likewise how much time runs waste in sleep, how many hours pass every day, during

which the operations of reason are suspended, and fancy is all that while busy at work in a thousand foolish dreams; yet then God preserves us, and gives his angels a charge over us. Let us therefore when we are awake set reason on work, find it employment, and support its authority by sober-mindedness; and let not the conversation of the day be idle and impertinent as the dreams of the night are, as I fear with many it is, both young and old.

Think likewise how piteous the case of those is that are deprived of the use of their reason, that were born ideots, or are fallen into deep melancholy, or into distraction; that are incapable of thinking, speaking, and acting rationally, and are put out of the possession, government, and enjoyment of themselves. This might have been your case; it is God's great mercy to you that it is not so; nor can you be secure, but that some time or other it may be so. You would dread it as the greatest affliction, not to be able to use your reason, and will you not dread it as a great sin, *not to use it well*, now you are able?

When St. *Paul* would prove to the most noble *Festus*, that he was not beside himself, his plea is, *I speak the words of truth and soberness*; as if those that do not speak the words of truth and soberness, all whose talk is banter and vanity, were no better than mad, and beside themselves. O that such young people as are thus taken in the snare of carnal mirth, and are in effect made delirious by it, as you may perceive by the rambles of their talk, would at length recover their senses, return to their wits, and be sober-minded! that they would, like the prodigal son, *come to themselves*, and come to a resolution to stay no longer in the devil's fields, to feed the swine of their own sinful
lusts,

lusts, but to return to their father's house, where they will be happy, and shall be welcome.

When Christ was here upon earth, healing all manner of disease, there was no one sort of patients that he had greater numbers of, than such as were lunatick, and their lunacy was the effect of their being possessed with the devil; it was the miserable case of many *young* people. We find parents making complaints of this kind concerning their children; one has a daughter, another has a son, grievously vexed with a devil; but Christ healed them all, dispossessed satan, and so restored them to the possession of their own souls; and it is said of some whom he thus relieved, that they then sat *at the feet of Jesus clothed, and in their right mind*: it is the word used in the text, *Luke 8. 35.* As far as sin reigns in you, satan reigns, and your souls are in his possession. Christ by casting out devils, gave a specimen and indication of the great design of his gospel and grace, which was to cure men of spiritual frenzy, by breaking the power of satan in them. O that you would therefore apply yourselves to him, submit to the word of his grace, pray for the spirit of his grace, and by this it will appear, that both these have had their due influence upon you, if you sit at the feet of Jesus in your right mind, *i. e.* in a sober mind. And indeed you never come to your right mind, till you do sit down at the feet of Jesus, to learn of him, and be ruled by him; you never are truly rational creatures, till in Christ you become new creatures.

2. You are all sinners, and guilty before God; *conceived in iniquity, born in sin*; you are by nature *children of disobedience, and children of wrath*; whether you have ever thought of it, or no, certainly it is so, the scripture hath concluded you all under sin, and consequently under a sentence of death, like that of a physician upon his patient, when he

pronounceth his disease mortal; nay, like that of a judge upon the prisoner, when he pronounceth his crime capital, so that both ways your danger is imminent and extreme. And shall not the consideration of this prevail to make you sober?

Were your bodies under some threatening disease, which in all probability would in a little time cut off the thread of your life, I believe that would make you serious, that would make you look solemn; were you condemned to die shortly by the hand of justice, that would sober you: and is not the death and ruin of an immortal soul more to be dreaded than that of a mortal body? And should not the danger of that give a louder alarm to the most secure, and cast a greater damp upon the most jovial, than of the other. And when you are told, that though the disease is mortal, it is not incurable, though the crime is capital, it is not unpardonable, how should that yet further prevail to make you serious; to make you very solicitous, very industrious to get the disease healed, and the crime forgiven? Your case will not allow any of your time or thoughts to run waste, or to be trifled away, but you have need by sober-mindedness to employ both in a due attendance to the things that belong to your everlasting peace.

You are sinners, and therefore have reason to think very meanly and humbly of yourselves, not to expect applauses, nor resent contempts, nor to aim at great things in the world. What have such vile wretches as we are to be proud of, or to promise ourselves in this world, who owe our lives, which we have a thousand times forfeited, to the Divine patience?

If yet you are in a state of sin, in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity, the misery of your state is enough to give an effectual check to your vain mirth, and would do it if you knew and considered

considered it. *Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people, for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God,* Hos. 9. 1. Joy is forbidden fruit to wicked people. There cannot be a more monstrous absurdity, than that which they are guilty of, who say to the Almighty, *depart from us*; who set him at a distance, set him at defiance, and yet *take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ, and spend their days in mirth,* Job 21. 12, 13, 14.

If through grace the power of sin is broken in you, and you are delivered from the wrath to come, and being in Christ, there is no condemnation to you, yet the very remembrance of the misery and danger you were in, and are delivered from, how near you were to the pit's brink, and how you were snatched as brands out of the burning, should make you serious. You still carry a body of death about with you, which should make you cry out, *O wretched creatures that we are!* you are compassed about with enemies that war against your souls; you have not yet put off the harness, but have reason still to fear, lest a *promise being left you of entering into rest, any of you should seem to come short*; and this is enough to make you considerate, and cautious, and sober-minded. In short, till you have by faith in Christ made your peace with God, and are become sincere christians, you have no reason to rejoice at all; and when you have done it, and have some comfortable evidence of a blessed change through grace wrought in you, you will then have better things to rejoice in, than this world can furnish you with; and having tasted spiritual pleasures, will be dead to all the delights of sense; offer them to those that know no better.

3. You are setting out in a world of sorrows and snares, of troubles and temptations, and therefore are concerned to be sober-minded, that you may be armed accordingly, so as that the troubles of
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the world may not rob you of your peace, nor the temptations of it rob you of your purity. Your way lies through a wilderness, a land of darkness and drought, and nothing but sober-mindedness will carry you safe through it to *Canaan*. Now you are young, and have the world before you, you are apt to flatter yourselves with a conceit that every thing will be safe and pleasant; your mountain you think stands so strong that it cannot be moved; that nothing can shake either your integrity, or your prosperity; but you little know what this world is, and what snares there are in every condition of life, and every company; in all employments, in all enjoyments. And if you be careless and vain, and live at large, you make yourselves an easy prey to the tempter, and are in danger of being carried away by the course of this world; you have need therefore to *take heed to yourselves, and to keep your souls diligently*, that is, to be sober-minded; for considering the *corruption that is in the world through lust*, and the corruption that is in your own hearts, what may we not fear when they come together? When the restraints of education are taken off, and you begin to find yourselves at liberty, you will meet with so many enticing sins and sinners, that you will be in danger of falling into licentiousness, and being undone, unless the impressions of your education still abide, unless by this sober-mindedness you still be your own parents, your own masters, your own tutors, and by an established virtue, through the grace of God, a law to yourselves. You know not what trials and troubles you may be reserved for, but you know that *man who is born of a woman is but of few days, and full of trouble*; his crosses certain, more or less; a cross to be taken up daily; his comforts uncertain; and should not this make you sober, that when afflictions come, they may not be so

so terrible as they are to those, who by indulging themselves in mirth and pleasure, have made themselves like the *tender and delicate woman, that would not set so much as the sole of her foot to the ground, for tenderness and delicacy?* Deut. 28. 56. Even the common calamities of human life press hard upon such, and wound deep; whereas those that live a sober, serious, self-denying life, are like Christ, acquainted with grief, have made it familiar to them, and can the easier reconcile themselves to it.

Some of you perhaps are sickly, and often out of health; you carry distempers about with you which tell you what you are; and you are inexcusable if you be not thereby made sober; if that do not deaden you to the delights of sense, and lower your expectations from the creature, and dispose you to serious work. By the sickness of the body, the heart should be made better; many an one's has been; the uncertainty of whose bodily health has conduced very much to the health of their souls. Those do indeed walk contrary to God that allow themselves in vanity, while they carry about with them sensible tokens of their mortality.

But even the most strong and healthful may *die in their full strength*, and must die at last. We are all dying daily: death is working in us, and we are walking towards it, and shall not that make us sober? Theirs was an unpardonable crime that said, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die*, Isa. 22. 13, 14. That when they were minded by the prophet of the near approach of death, as a reason why they should repent and reform speedily, turned it quite a contrary way, and argued, "if we must have a short life, let it be a merry one;" *surely, saith God, this iniquity shall not be purged from you.—The end of all things is at hand*, is near at hand with us, *be ye therefore sober*; that whenever our Lord shall

shall come, we may be in a good frame to meet him. When we consider what our bodies will be shortly, how near akin they are to corruption and the worms, we shall see little reason to pamper them, and to bring them up delicately; for we are hastening to the house of darkness, where the voice of mirth is no more heard.

“ When th’ hair grows sweet with pride and lust,
 “ The powder doth forget the dust.”

Mr. Herbert.

P A R T III.

Several arguments for sober-mindedness have been mentioned. We now add,

4. You see many young people about you ruined and undone, and it was for want of being sober-minded. Many perhaps you have known, or might have observed, that were born of good parents, had a religious education, set out well, were for some time hopeful, and promised fair with buds and blossoms, but ended in the flesh after they had *begun in the spirit*; and it was for want of consideration; they could not be persuaded to think soberly; they were *drawn away of their own lust, and enticed*; and those enticements were hearkened to, when a deaf ear was turned to wisdom’s calls, and to all the dictates of reason and conscience; they would not hearken to the voice of those charmers charming never so wisely. Some have outrun their apprenticeships, others have foolishly thrown themselves away in marriage; others have set up, and made a flourish awhile, but have soon become bankrupts, either by living high, or by grasping at more business than they could grasp; some have been carried away by atheistical and profane notions, and others by a loose and vain conversation; all
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which would have been happily prevented, if they had been humble and discreet, and duly governed their appetites and passions.

Others harms should be your warnings, to take heed of the rocks they split upon. Sir *Richard Blackmore*, in his heroic poem of *Job*, thus gives the reason of *Job*'s pious care concerning his sons, after the days of their feasting were gone about.

“ For he with mournful eyes had often spy'd,
“ Scatter'd on pleasure's smooth but treach'rous tide,
“ The spoils of virtue overpower'd by sense,
“ And floating wrecks of ruin'd innocence.”

5. You are here in this world upon your trial for heaven. O that you would firmly believe this, not only that you are hastening apace into eternity, but that it will certainly be to you a comfortable or a miserable eternity, according to what you are and do while you are in the body; and this consideration, one would think, should make you sober.

Eternal life is set before you, eternal happiness in the vision and fruition of God: you may make it sure if it be not your own fault; may lay hold on it if you look about you now. There are substantial honours, satisfying pleasures, and true riches, in comparison with which all the riches, honours and pleasures of this world are empty names and shadows: these may be your portion for ever; they shall be so, if *by a patient continuance in well-doing, through Christ you seek for this glory, honour and immortality.* You are here probationers for the best preferment, for a place in the new *Jerusalem*; you stand candidates for a crown, a kingdom, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; you stand fair for it; and is it not then time to think? to think seriously, and soberly to apply yourselves to that business for which you were sent
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into this world, and which if it be done faithfully, you may remove with comfort to another world; but if not, your remove to that world will be terrible? You ought to be serious and circumspect now, because as you spend your time, so you are likely to spend your eternity; and a great deal of work you have to do, and but little time to do it in.

Let me put the case to you as to this world: If a wise and wealthy man should take one of you that had but little, and tell you that you should come into his family, and he would provide food and clothing for you for one year; and if you carried yourself well for that year, would submit to the prudent discipline of his family, would be observant of him, and take care to please him, that then at the year's end he would give you ten thousand pounds; but if you were rude and ungovernable, he would turn you out of doors; would not this put you upon considering? Would it not make you sober? Would you not deny yourselves the gratification of many a desire, for fear of displeasing such a benefactor? If he were never so humourous you would humour him, when it were so much your interest. This is your case; the time of your probation is but short; the terms are easy and reasonable; the God you are to please is not hard to be pleased, nor will he impose any thing upon you but what becomes you, and will be pleasant to you; the happiness he proposeth is infinitely more worth than thousands of gold and silver; and the security he gives is the inviolable promise of one that cannot lie nor deceive. The misery, if you come short of it, is worse than being turned out of doors, it is to be cast into utter darkness. *Life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse* are set before you, and will you not then *set your hearts to all the words which we testify unto you?* Will you not think soberly, that you may make
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sure work in a matter of such vast importance, on which your lives and the lives of your souls depend? You are here upon your good behaviour, and therefore are concerned to behave yourselves well; for if you do not, "Son, remember," will be a dreadful peal rung in your ears shortly; "remember how fair thou stood'st for happiness, and what the morsel of meat was, for which, like profane *Esau*, thou soldest that birth-right."

6. and lastly, You must shortly go to judgment. With the consideration of this *Solomon* endeavours to make his young man sober, that is for walking in the way of his heart, and *in the sight of his eyes*; *know thou, that for all these things God shall bring thee into judgment*; and thou that makest a jest of every thing, shalt not be able to turn that off with a jest hereafter, however thou mayest think to do it now, *Eccl. 11. 9.* This likewise he urgeth upon his pupil in the close of that book, as a reason why he should be religious; *By these, my son, be admonished to fear God, and keep his commandments; for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, Eccl. 12. 12, 13, 14.*

Young men that have strict masters, who call them to an account how they spend their time, and how they go on with their business, are thereby obliged to industry and care; whereas if the master be careless, the servant is in temptation to be so too; but know, that you have a *master in heaven*, whose eye is always upon you, and follows you closer than the eye of any master on earth can: he knows and observes all you do, all you say, all you think; and an account is kept of it in the book of his omniscience and your own conscience. These books will shortly be opened, and not only all reviewed, but you will be judged accordingly; and are you not then concerned to think, and speak, and act accordingly? When you are vain and frothy, and your converse loose and profane, should not this
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be a check upon you, and make you sober to think,
 “ How will this look when it comes to be looked
 “ over again? How will it pass, when I pass my
 “ trials for eternity?”

Your bodies are mortal, you souls are immortal; therefore let not sin reign either in the one or in the other. You are dying; are dying daily; in the midst of life, nay in the beginning of it, we are in death. You may die this day, may die in youth, and the number of your months be cut off in the midst; and you know that *after death is the judgment*; and as your state is fixed in the particular judgment at death, so it will be found in the general judgment at the end of time, and so it will remain to eternity. How awful, how dreadful the appearance of the Judge will be in the great day, the word of God has again and again told us. *Knowing therefore those terrors of the Lord*, the terrors of that day, *we persuade men*, we persuade young men to be sober-minded; and therefore to let their moderation, that is, their sober-mindedness, their good government and management of themselves, be known unto all men, because the Lord is at hand. The Judge standeth before the door.

APPLICATION.

You see now what is expected from you that are young, and how justly it is expected, from the word of God. And now shall I intreat you to make use of what I have said, to make it useful to yourselves, that this discourse may not be lost upon you.

1. Shall I desire you to examine yourselves, that you may know your own selves, and take heed of being mistaken in your judgment concerning yourselves. Can your hearts witness for you, that through the grace of God, by remembering yourselves

selves and your Creator in the days of your youth, you are become in some measure sober-minded, and answer this beautiful character of young people? I hope I speak to many such: the misery is, that those who most need these instructions and warnings, come least in the way of them; they will not hear them, will not read them, because they resolve they will not heed them, or be ruled by them. But to you that are sober-minded, I say as Christ did to the faithful ones in *Thyatira*, I will lay upon you no other burden but that which you have already; and I am sure you will agree to call it a light burden: *Hold fast till Christ comes*; hold fast your integrity, hold fast your sober-mindedness. Some are more inclined to soberness in their natural temper than others are; to them these laws of sober-mindedness will be easier than to others; but to them that are not so, though it be more difficult, it is also more necessary; wisdom, and grace and consideration are intended to check the disorders of the natural temper.

But take heed lest you deceive yourselves; and be more forward than there is cause to rank yourselves among the sober-minded, and to think that you need not these admonitions. It is not a sober *look* that will serve, though that is graceful enough, if it be not affected and forced; but it is the sober *mind* that we are pressing earnestly upon you: examine that now, for God will examine that, and judge of you by it; when you shall find, that to be *carnally minded is death*, but to be *spiritually minded is life and peace*.

2. Shall I desire you to exhort yourselves? preach to your own hearts; preach over this sermon to them. Let all young people charge and admonish and encourage themselves to be sober-minded.

Let those that have loose notions in religion, and are fond of any suggestions, though never so ab-

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furd,

furd, which derogate from the authority and honour of the scriptures and revealed religion, exhort themselves to be sober-minded, and not to be carried about with every wind, nor carried away from the great principles of christianity, by the craft of them who lie in wait to deceive, and bring them to downright atheism. Let those that are drawn into, or are in danger of, the ruining sins of drunkenness or uncleanness, that have been so fatal to multitudes of young people, exhort themselves to be sober-minded, to sit down and consider seriously what will be in the end thereof, and how dreadful that destruction is which these vicious courses certainly lead to. Except you repent and reform, you must perish, must eternally perish. If the word of God be true, you must; and how miserable will your case be if you bring it to this dilemma, that either God must be false, or you must be damned. Let those that spend their time in carnal mirth, and sensual pleasures, whose business is nothing but sport and pastime, and their converse nothing but banter and buffoonry, exhort themselves to be sober-minded, sometimes to be serious, and consider themselves; and try if they can make it as pleasant to themselves to think in earnest, as it is now to talk in jest; for I am sure it will be abundantly more profitable. Let those young people that are addicted to gaming, and flatter themselves with hopes of getting that easily and quickly, which they love above any thing, but are not willing to be at the pains of getting honestly, exhort themselves to be sober-minded, and to consider what a sinful way this is of trading with what they have, and which they cannot in faith pray to God to bless and prosper them in; to consider that whether they win or lose, they can have no true comfort, no joy of their gains, for it is wealth gotten by vanity, that has a curse attending it; nor can they have any support

under their losses, for they are owing to their own sin and folly. How many apprentices have been brought by their love of gaming to rob their masters, and so to ruin themselves! And how many young gentlemen have sunk their estates, and young tradesmen their stocks and business by it; and will you, for want of one sober thought, split upon the same rock? Let those who are allured into this snare, into the beginnings of it, dread it, and keep at the utmost distance from it; and let those who are taken in it break out of it immediately with resolution: *Do this now, my son; deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter.* Let young dealers in the world, that are entering into business, exhort themselves to be sober-minded, to set out under the conduct of religion and true wisdom: to love their business, to apply themselves, and accommodate themselves to it. Let them learn betimes to take care; for nothing will be done to purpose without it; to attend the work of their callings with diligence, and order the affairs of them with discretion, and in all their ways to acknowledge God; then are they likely to prosper, and to have good success.

Let young professors of religion, that by the grace of God have *escaped the corruption that is in the world*, and given up their names to Jesus Christ, exhort themselves to be sober-minded in their profession. Let them take heed of conceitedness, and spiritual pride, of confidence in themselves, and their own judgment and ability. Let them aim to be best rather than to be greatest in the kingdom of God among men. Let them take heed of running into extremes, and of falling into bigotry and censoriousness. Let them be sober in their opinions of truth and falsehood, of good and evil, of others and of themselves; expecting that age and experience will rectify many of their present mistakes.

Let young scholars, whose genius leads them to books and learning, exhort themselves to be sober-minded. You soon find that you must be serious, must be much so; must learn to think, and to think closely, or you will never make any thing of it. It is not enough to read, but you must study and digest what you read. But that is not all; in your pursuits of knowledge you must be sober, not exercising yourselves in things too high for you, nor boasting yourselves of your attainments. Be humble in the use of what you do know, using it for edification, not for ostentation. It is but a windy knowledge that *puffeth up*; that only is good for something which *doeth good*, 1 Cor. 8. 1. Be humble likewise in your enquiries after what you would know; not coveting to be *wise above what is written*, or to intrude into those things which you have not seen, as many who are vainly puffed up with a fleshly mind; but *be wise unto sobriety*. Be willing to be in the dark about that which God has not thought fit to reveal, and in doubt about that which he has not thought fit to determine. This is well expressed by the learned *Grotius*, in a poem of his,

“ *Nescire velle quæ magister maximus,*

“ *Docere non vult, erudita inscitia est.*

To recommend this sober-mindedness to all of you that are young, this seriousness and sedateness of spirit, and an aptness to consider; be convinced of what great advantage it will be to you every way.

1.) Thus you will escape the vanity that childhood and youth is subject to, and rescue those precious years from it. It will keep them from running waste, as commonly they do, like water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again, and will do much towards the filling up of the
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the empty spaces, even of those years. When *Solomon* had observed that childhood and youth is vanity, he immediately adds for the cure of that vanity, *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth*, that is, in one word, *be serious*. By using yourselves to consideration, you will come to be aware of the snares your spiritual enemies lay for you, of the snake under the green grass, and will not be imposed upon so easily as many are by the wiles of satan; and by habituating yourselves to self-denial and mortification of the flesh, and a holy contempt of this world, you will wrest the most dangerous weapons out the hand of the strong man armed, and will take from him that part of his armour, in which he most trusted, for it is by the world and the flesh that he mostly fights against us: nay, and this sober-mindedness will put upon you the *whole armour of God*, that you may be able to stand in the evil day; and so to resist the devil, as that he may flee from you. This sober-mindedness will prevent many a temptation which a vain mind invites, and courts, and throws men into the way of; and will shut and lock the door against the tempter, who when he finds it so will give it up; and his agents will be apt to do so too, concluding it in vain to tempt the sober mind; they will do as *Naomi*, who when she saw that *Ruth* was stedfastly minded, left off speaking to her.

2.) Thus you will recommend yourselves to the favour of God, and of all wise and good men; will obtain that good name which is better than precious ointment, and more fragrant; a name for good things with God and good people. God will love those that love him, and seek him early; and will never forget this kindness of your youth for serious godliness. If you thus give him the first of your first fruits, it will be an acceptable offering to him. The beloved disciple was the youngest. And

it is said of that young man, who asked that serious question, and asked it soberly, *Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?* that Jesus beholding him, loved him, Mark 10. 21. As he was likewise well pleased with another, that answered discreetly, *ὁ σοφός*, like one that had a sober mind, Mat. 21. 34. And that humility and quietness of spirit, which is one branch of this sober mind, is an ornament, which wherever it is found, especially in young people, is in the sight of God of great price; and that is valuable indeed which he values, and by it we ought to value ourselves.

Nor is it an argument to be despised by you, that all sober people that know you, will love you, and will have no greater joy than to see you live soberly; but it is an argument the rather to be insisted upon by us, because young people are commonly very much influenced by reputation, and have an eye to that more than any thing in the government of themselves, and the choice of their way. Now it is certain reputation is on religion's side, and if the matter be rightly understood, will help to turn the scale for sober-mindedness. It is true there are some, there are many, to whom a young man will recommend himself by being loose and extravagant, and talking at random against that which is serious; but what kind of people are they? Are they not the *fools in Israel*? Are they not sots or fops, whose valuation of persons and things is not at all to be valued? But do not all discreet and considerate people esteem a young man that is sober, and shew him respect, and converse with him, and put a confidence in him? It is the character of a citizen of Zion, that *in his eyes a vile person is contemned*: though he set up for a wit or a beau, yet if he be loose and profane, he despiseth him as a fool, and a flash, but he *honours them that fear the Lord*, and live conscientiously. Now to which

which of these would you recommend yourselves? Whose opinion would you covet to stand right in, to stand high in? Would you not chuse to have credit with men of virtue and probity, who are themselves in reputation for wisdom and honour, rather than to be carested and cried up by those that being slaves to their pleasures can never be masters of true reason? Especially considering, that these young people who are truly sober, serious, and conscientious, provided they take care to avoid affectation and superciliousness, will be loved and respected even by those that are themselves loose and vain; and will be manifested in their consciences one time or other, that they are the most valuable. And I think it is worth considering, and would bear a debate, whether ordinary sober serious people do not love their friends and companions better than vain loose people do theirs, and are not more ready to do them true service?

3.) Thus you will prepare for a useful life, if it please God you live long, and for a comfortable one. Those that are sober-minded when they are young, as they are thereby fortified against every evil word and work, so they are *furnished for every good word and work*, and are likely to be in their day vessels of honour fit for our master's use, while the ludicrous and unthinking live to be at the best the unprofitable burthens of the earth, and good for nothing. Young people that are sober, are likely to be good, and do good in every relation, and condition of life: They that are sober when they are children and servants, that do the duties, and improve the advantages of their learning age, and behave themselves prudently then, are fitting up to have the charge of families themselves, to which they are likely to be great blessings, and to the places in which they live. They will not only be the joy of their parents

hearts while they live, but an honour to their memories when they are gone: and thus the children will *rise up and call the* discreet and virtuous *mother, blessed*, by treading in her steps, and producing the good fruits of their prudent and religious education.

Young men that are sober-minded are likely to be in time serviceable to the communities they are members of, civil or sacred, in a higher or lower sphere. They may be called to the magistracy or ministry, to serve the state, or the church; but few ever come to do real service or credit to either, or to be of account in either of those posts of honour, unless they be sober-minded when they are young. Lose the morning, and you lose the day. But though they may not arrive to such a public station, yet they may in a private capacity be eminently useful to their neighbours in the things of the world, and to their fellow-christians in divine things, and so be instruments of glory to God. They that are sober-minded when they are young, if they go on as they begin, what will the wisdom be which the *multitude of their years will teach*? *Obadiab* that feared the Lord *from his youth*, came to fear him *greatly*. Young saints, we hope, will be eminent ones.

4.) Thus you will prepare for a happy death, if it please God you should die quickly, and may then die cheerfully. O that young people were so wise as to *consider their latter end*, not only as sure, but as near; for it is folly for the youngest, and strongest, and most healthful to put far from them the day of death, when death is every day working in us. Now the best preparation you can make for it, if you should die in youth, is to live soberly: then the sting of it will be taken out, thro' Christ, and consequently the terror of it taken off; and therefore tho' you may pray with
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the Psalmist, *O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days*, yet if the cup may not pass away, you need not dread it; you know the worst that death can do you; if it shorten your life on earth, that will be abundantly made up in a better life. *Abijah*, that sober youth, in whom was found some good things towards the Lord God of *Israel* in the house of *Jeroboam*, dies in the flower of his age; but there is no harm done him, he comes to his grave in peace, and goes to heaven triumphantly, *1 Kings* 14. 13. Whereas those that are loose and extravagant, if they die in youth, (as *Elibu* speaks, *Job* 36. 14.) their soul dieth; so it is in the original; they are spiritually dead, *twice dead*. While they lived in pleasure, they were dead, though they lived; and therefore when they die in sin, they are twice dead, and their life is *among the unclean*, (among the *Sodomites*, as the margin reads it) who suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, *Jude* 7, 12.

Let me now close with some *general directions* to young people, which may be of use to them, in order to the making of them sober-minded.

1. *Es*spouse sober principles; for men are as their principles are. In these avoid extremes, and in the less weighty matters of the law keep the mean, that you may reserve your zeal for the great things of God, the things that belong to your everlasting peace. Take heed on the one hand of bigotry in the circumstances of religion, and on the other hand of lukewarmness and indifferency in the essentials of it.

Fix such principles as these to yourselves with reference to the main matter:—That God's favour is better than life, and his displeasure worse than death:—That sin is the greatest evil:—That the soul is the man, and that is best for us that is best for our souls:—That Jesus Christ is all in all to us, and we are undone without an interest in him:—That it is as much our wisdom as it is our duty to be

be religious :—That the world has not any thing in it which will make us happy :—That time and the things of time are nothing, in comparison with eternity and the things of eternity.—These, and such as these, are principles of eternal truth ; and our firm belief of them, and adherence to them, will be to us of eternal consequence.

And as to other things, let your principles be,—That, “ God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that fears God, and works righteousness, is accepted of him,” and therefore ought to be so of us :—That “ the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost ; and he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men.”—By such principles as these keep up moderation and sober-mindedness in your profession of religion, which will contribute much to the promoting of it in every thing else.

2. Dwell much upon such considerations as are proper to make you sober-minded. Be frequent in meditation upon serious things, the great things of the law and gospel, and let them not be looked upon as foreign things. As you think in your hearts, so you are. If the imagination of the thought of the heart be vain and corrupt, if that eye be evil, the whole man will be accordingly ; but if that be serious, the affections and aims will be sober too. However you may allow the outward thoughts to be sometimes diverting, the inward thought must be reserved for that which is directing.

Think much of the eye of God, which is always upon you, that you may be careful to approve yourselves to him in every thing ; of the glory of God, which you ought always to have your eye upon, that you may answer the end of your creation. Think much of the many sins you have committed

committed against God, that you may give diligence to make sure the pardon of them; and of the many mercies you have received from God, that you may study what returns you shall make for his favour. Think much of the opportunities you enjoy, that you may be busy to improve them; and of the spiritual enemies you are compassed about with, that you may be sober and vigilant in guarding against them.

The four last things, death and judgment, heaven and hell, are commonly recommended as proper subjects of meditation, in order to the making of the mind serious. Because *the end of all things is at hand*, and that end an entrance upon a state *without end*, be ye therefore sober; and check vanity with that consideration.

I have somewhere read of one that had been a great courtier and statesman in queen *Elizabeth's* time, I think it was secretary *Walsingham*, that in his advanced years he retired into privacy in the country, whither some of his pleasant companions came to see him, and told him he was melancholy; "No, saith he, I am *serious*, and it is fit I should be so; for all are serious round about me, and why then should not you and I be serious?" God is serious in observing of us; Christ is serious in interceding for us; the Spirit is serious in striving with us; the truths of God are serious truths; his laws, his promises, his threatnings, all serious: angels are serious in their administration to us, our spiritual enemies serious in their attempts against us; glorified saints are serious in the embraces of divine love; poor damned sinners cannot but be serious under the pourings out of divine wrath; and we ourselves shall be serious shortly.

3. Chuse sober company. Nothing is of greater consequence to young people than what company they keep, for we insensibly grow like those with whom

whom we converse, especially with whom we delight to converse. Many that were thought to be very soberly inclined, have had their good inclinations turned the contrary way, by keeping vain and loose company, by which perhaps at first they were not aware of any danger, but thought their conversation innocent enough. Tho' ill company perhaps bears more blame sometimes than it deserves from those who think to excuse themselves by laying the fault on their companions, yet it is agreed to have been of most pernicious consequence to multitudes that sat out well. If therefore you would be wise and good, chuse such for your associates and bosom friends as will give you good advice, and set you good examples. He that walketh with wise men, is wise, or would be wise, and he shall be wise; when a companion of fools is deceived, and shall be destroyed. Keep at a distance from loose and vain company, for who can touch pitch and not be defiled? Who can converse familiarly with those that are wicked and profane, and not contract guilt, or grief, or both? If you resolve, as *David* did, to keep the commandments of your God, you must say to evil-doers as he did, *Depart from me*, Psal. 119. 115. and be as he was, *Companions of all those that fear God*, ver. 63. and let your delight be in the sober-minded, the excellent of the earth.

4. Read sober books. Those that are given to reading, are as much under the influence of the books they read, as of the persons they converse with, and therefore in the choice of them you need to be very cautious, and take advice. Nothing more promotes vanity, especially among the refined part of mankind, than romances and plays, and loose poems; and thus even their solitudes and retirements, which we hope might contribute to their seriousness, are lost, and make them more
vain,

vain, and more ingeniously so. Let us therefore take the same method to make us sober, more sober; converse with those books which are substantial, and judicious, out of which we may learn wisdom. The book of God is given us on purpose to make us *wise to salvation*, make it familiar to you, and let it *dwell in you richly*. Let it lead you, let it talk with you, and do you follow it, and talk with it, *Prov. 6. 22.* And many other good books we have to help us to understand and apply the scripture, which we should be conversant with. Enquire not for merry books, songs, and jests, but serious books, which will help to put you into, and keep you in a serious frame.

5. Abound much in sober work. Habits are contracted by frequent acts: If therefore you would have a sober mind, employ yourselves much in meditation and prayer, and other devout and holy exercises. And in these let your hearts be fixed, and let all that is within you be employed. Be much in secret worship as well as diligent and constant in your attendance on public ordinances; those who neglect these, cannot but lose their seriousness.

And see to it that you be very serious when you are about serious work, that you profane not the holy things. I look upon it to be in young people as happy an indication of a serious mind, and as hopeful an omen of a serious life, as any other, to be reverent and serious in the worship of God. For it is a sign the vanity of the mind runs high and strong indeed, when even there it will not be restrained from indecencies; and he is loose indeed that is *almost in all evil, in the midst of the congregation and assembly*, *Prov. 5. 14.* The greatness of the God with whom you have to do, and the greatness of the concern you have to do with him in,

when you are engaged in his worship, should strike an awe upon you, and make you serious.

And have this in your eye in all religious exercises, that by them you may be made more serious; and that the impressions of other holy exercises may be the deeper, and take the faster hold, let me advise young people that are sober-minded to come betimes to the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Let me press it upon them, not only as a duty they owe to Christ, but as that which will be of great advantage to themselves to strengthen their resolutions, *with purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord*. As to those who keep off from it, it is either because they know they are not sober-minded, or because they are not determined to continue so; but none of you will own either of those reasons. Delay not therefore, by that most sacred solemn bond, to *join yourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, never to be forgotten*.

And now how do you relish this word of exhortation? Shall I leave you all resolved in the strength of God's grace, that now in the days of your youth you will be sober-minded? If so, *The Lord keep it always in the imagination of the thought of your heart, and establish your way before him!*

S E R M O N V.

Directions for beginning every day with
God *.

P S A L M V. 3.

*My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O
Lord, in the morning will I direct my prayer
unto thee, and will look up.*

DAVID having resolved in general, v. 2. that he would abound in the duty of prayer, and abide by it—*Unto thee will I pray*, here fixeth one proper time for it, and that is the morning: *My voice shalt thou hear in the morning*: Not in the morning only; *David* solemnly addressed himself to the duty of prayer three times a day, as *Daniel* did; *morning and evening, and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud*, Psalm 55. 17. Nay, he doth not think that enough, but *Seven times a day will I praise thee*, Psalm 119. 164. But particularly in the morning.

Doct. It is our wisdom and duty, to begin every day with God.—Observe,

I. The good work itself that we are to do. God must hear our voice, we must direct our prayer to him, and we must look up.

* Preached at a morning lecture at Bethnal-green, Aug. 13 and 21, 1712.

II. The

II. The special time appointed, and observed for this good work; and that is in the morning: every morning, as duly as the morning comes.

I. The good work which by the example of *David* we are here taught to do, is in one word to *pray*: a duty dictated by the light and law of nature, which plainly and loudly speaks, *Should not a people seek unto their God?* But which the gospel of Christ gives us much better instructions in and encouragements to, than any that nature furnisheth us with; for it tells us what we must pray for, in whose name we must pray, and by whose assistance; it invites us to *come boldly to the throne of grace*, and to *enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus*. This work we are to do not in the morning only, but at other times, at all times. The throne of grace is always open, and humble supplicants are always welcome, and cannot come unseasonably. Let us see how *David* here expresseth his pious resolution to abide by this duty.

1. *My voice shalt thou hear.*

David may here be understood as promising himself a gracious acceptance with God. *Thou shalt*, i. e. thou wilt *hear my voice*, when in the morning I direct my prayer to thee; so it is the language of his faith, grounded upon God's promise, that his ear shall be always open to his people's cry. We may be sure of this, and we must pray in the assurance of it, that wherever God finds a praying heart, he will be found a prayer-hearing God. Whatever we ask of God as a father, in the name of Jesus Christ the mediator, according to the will of God revealed in the scripture, it shall be granted us either in kind or kindness; so the promise is, *John* 16. 23. and the truth of it is sealed by the concurring experience of the saints in all ages, ever since men began to call upon the
name

name of the Lord, that *Jacob's* God never yet said to *Jacob's* seed, *Seek ye me in vain*. When we come to God by prayer, if we come aright we may be confident of this, that notwithstanding the distance between heaven and earth, and our great unworthiness to have any favour shewed us, yet God doth hear our voice, and will not turn away our prayer, nor his mercy. Or,

It is rather to be taken, as *David's* promising God a constant *attendance on him*, in the way he has appointed. *My voice shalt thou hear*, i. e. I will speak to thee: because thou hast inclined thine ear unto me many a time, therefore I have taken up a resolution to call upon thee at all times, even to the end of my time. Not a day shall pass, but thou shalt be sure to hear from me. Not that the *voice* is the thing that God regards, as they seemed to think, who in prayer *made their voice to be heard on high*, Isa. 58. 4. *Hannah* prayed and prevailed, when her voice was not heard. But it is the voice of the heart that is here meant: Praying is lifting up the soul to God, and pouring out the heart before him; yet as far as the expressing of the devout affections of the heart by words may be of use to fix the thoughts, and to excite and quicken the desires, it is good to draw near to God, not only with a pure heart, but with an humble voice; so must we *render the calves of our lips*. However, God understands the language of the heart, and that is the language in which we must speak to God. *David* prays here, v. 1. not only *give ear to my words*, but *consider my meditation*. This therefore we have to do in every prayer, we must speak to God; we must see to it that God hears from us daily.

1.) He expects and requires it. Tho' he has no need of us or our services, nor can be benefited by them; yet he has obliged us to offer the sacrifice

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of prayer and praise to him continually. Thus he will keep up his *authority* over us, and keep us continually in mind of our subjection to him, which we are apt to forget. He requires that by prayer we solemnly pay our homage to him, and give honour to his name, that by this act and deed of our own, thus frequently repeated, we may strengthen the obligations we lie under to observe his statutes, and keep his laws, and be more and more sensible of the weight of them. *He is thy Lord, and worship thou him*, that by frequent humble adorations of his perfections, thou mayest make a constant humble compliance with his will the more easy to thee. By doing obeisance, we are learning obedience.—And thus he will testify his *love* and *compassion* towards us. It would have been an abundant evidence of his concern for us, and his goodness to us, if he had only said, “Let me hear from you as often as there is occasion; call upon me in the time of trouble or want, and that is enough.” But to shew his complacency in us, as a father doth his affection to his child when he is sending him abroad, he gives us this charge, “Let me hear from you every day, by every post, though you have no particular business;” which shews, that *the prayer of the upright is his delight*. What a shame is this to us, that God is more willing to be prayed to, and more ready to hear prayer, than we are to pray?

2.) We have something to say to God every day. Many are not sensible of this, and it is their sin and misery: they live without God in the world; they think they can live without him, are not sensible of their dependence upon him, and their obligations to him, and therefore they have nothing to say to him; he never hears from them any more than the father did from his prodigal son, when he was upon the ramble, from one week's end to another. They ask scornfully, *What can the Almighty do*

do for them? And then no wonder if they ask next, *What profit shall we have if we pray unto him?* And the result is, they say to the Almighty, *Depart from us*, and so shall their doom be. But I hope better things of you, my brethren, and that you are not of those who *cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God*; you are ready to own that the Almighty can do much for you, and that there is profit in praying to him, and therefore resolve to *draw nigh to God*, that he may *draw nigh to you*. We have something to say to God daily,

(1.) As to a friend we love and have freedom with. To such a friend we never want something to say, tho' we have no particular business with him; to such a friend we unbosom ourselves, we profess our love and esteem, and with pleasure communicate our thoughts. *Abraham* is called the *friend of God*, and this honour have all the saints: *I have not called you servants, saith Christ, but friends; the secret of the Lord is with the righteous*. We are invited to *acquaint ourselves with him*, and to *walk with him*, as one friend walks with another. The fellowship of believers is said to be with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ; and have we then nothing to say to him? Is it not errand enough to the throne of his grace to admire his infinite perfections, which we can never fully comprehend, and yet never sufficiently contemplate, and take complacency in? To please ourselves in beholding the beauty of the Lord, and giving him the glory due to his name? Have we not a great deal to say to him in acknowledgment of his condescending grace and favour to us, in manifesting himself to us and not to the world; and in profession of our affection and submission to him: *Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee*.

God hath something to say to us as a friend every day, by the written word, in which we must hear his voice, by his providences, and by our own con-

sciences; and he hearkens and hears whether we have any thing to say to him by way of reply, and we are very unfriendly if we have not. When he saith to us, *Seek ye my face*, should not our hearts answer as to one we love, *Thy face, Lord, will we seek*.—When he saith to us, *Return ye backsliding children*, should not we readily reply, *Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God*? If he speak to us by way of conviction and reproof, ought we not to return an answer by way of confession and submission? If he speak to us by way of comfort, ought not we to reply in praise? If you love God you cannot be to seek for something to say to him, something for your hearts to pour out before him, which his grace has already put there.

(2.) As to a master we serve, and have business with. Think how numerous and important the concerns are that lie between us and God, and you will readily acknowledge that you have a great deal to say to him. We have a constant dependence upon him, all our expectation is from him; we have constant dealings with him. He is the God *with whom we have to do*, Heb. 4. 13.—Do we not know that our happiness is bound up in his favour? It is life, the life of our souls; it is better than the life of our bodies: and have we not business with God to seek his favour, to intreat it with our whole hearts, to beg as for our lives that he would lift up the light of his countenance upon us, and to plead Christ's righteousness, as that only thro' which we can hope to obtain God's loving-kindness?—Do we not know that we have offended God, that by sin we have made ourselves obnoxious to his wrath and curse, and that we are daily contracting guilt? and have we not then business enough with him to confess our fault and folly, to ask for pardon in the blood of Christ, and in him *who is our peace* to make our peace with God, and renew our covenant with him in his own strength,

to go and sin no more?—Do we not know that we have daily work to do for God, and our own souls? and have we not then business with God to beg of him to direct us in it, and strengthen us for it? to seek to him for assistance and acceptance, that he will work in us both to will and to do that which is good, and then countenance and own his own work? Such business as this the servant has with his master.—Do we not know that we are continually in danger? our bodies are so, and their lives and comforts. We are continually surrounded with diseases and deaths, whose arrows fly at midnight, and at noon-day; and have we not then business with God, going out and coming in, lying down and rising up, to put ourselves under the protection of his Providence, to be the charge of his holy angels? Our souls much more are so, and their lives and comforts. Those, our adversary the devil, a strong and subtle adversary, wars against, and seeks to devour; and have we not then business with God to put ourselves under the protection of his grace, and clad ourselves with his armour, that we may be able to stand against the wiles and violences of Satan; so as we may neither be surprised into sin by a sudden temptation, nor overpowered by a strong one?—Do we not know that we are dying daily, that death is working in us, and hastning towards us; and that death fetcheth us to judgment, and judgment fixeth us in our everlasting state? and have we not then something to say to God in preparation for what is before us? Shall we not say, *Lord make us to know our end! Lord teach us to number our days!* Have we not business with God to judge ourselves that we may not be judged?—Do we not know that we are members of that body whereof Christ is the head? and are we not concerned to approve ourselves living members? Have we not then business with God

upon the public account to make intercession for his church? Have we nothing to say for *Zion*? Nothing in behalf of *Jerusalem's* ruined walls? Nothing for the peace and welfare of the land of our nativity? Have we no relations, no friends that are dear to us, whose joys and griefs we share in? and have we nothing to say to God for them? no complaints to make, no requests to make known? Are none of them sick or in distress? none of them tempted or disconsolate? And have we not errands, at the throne of grace, to beg relief and succour for them?

Now lay all this together, and then consider whether you have not something to say to God every day; and particularly in days of trouble.

3.) If you have all this to say to God, what should hinder you from saying it every day?

(1.) Let not distance hinder you. You have occasion to speak with a friend, but he is a great way off, you cannot reach him, you know not where to find him, nor how to get a letter to him, and therefore your business with him is undone: but this needs not keep you from speaking to God; for tho' it is true, God is in heaven, and we are upon earth, yet he is nigh to all his praying people in all that they call upon him for; he hears their voice wherever they are. *Out of the depths I have cried unto thee, saith David: From the ends of the earth I will cry unto thee.* Nay, *Jonah* saith, *Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.* In all places we may find a way open heaven-ward: *Undique ad caelos tantundem est via.* Thanks be to him who by his own blood has consecrated for us a new and living way into the holiest, and settled a correspondence between heaven and earth.

(2.) Let not fear hinder you. You have business with a great man it may be; but he is so far above you, or so stern and severe towards all his inferiors,

riors, that you are afraid to speak to him, and you have none to introduce you, or speak a good word for you, and therefore you chuse rather to drop your cause: but there is no occasion for your being thus discouraged in speaking to God; you may *come boldly to the throne of his grace*, you have there a *παρρησία*, a liberty of speech; leave to pour out your whole souls. And such are his compassions to humble supplicants, that even his terror need not make them afraid. It is against the mind of God that you should frighten yourselves, he would have you encourage yourselves, for *you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption*, by which you are brought into this among the other glorious liberties of the children of God. Nor is this all; we have one to introduce us, and to speak for us, *an advocate with the Father*. Did ever children need an advocate with a father? but that by those two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, we have not only the relation of a father to depend upon, but the interest and intercession of an Advocate; a High Priest over the house of God, in whose name we have access with confidence.

(3.) Let not his knowing your business, and what you have to say to him, hinder you. You have business with such a friend, but you think you need not put yourselves to any trouble about it, for he is already apprized of it; he knows what you want, and what you desire, and therefore it is no matter for speaking to him. It is true, all your desire is before God, he knows your wants and burthens, but he will know them *from you*. He hath promised you relief, but his promise must be put in suit, and *he will for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them*, Ezek. 36. 37. Tho' we cannot by our prayers give him any information,

tion, yet we must by our prayers give him honour. It is true, nothing we can say can have any influence upon him, or move him to shew us mercy, but it may have an influence upon ourselves, and help to put us into a frame fit to receive mercy. It is a very easy and reasonable condition of his favours, *Ask, and it shall be given you*. It was to teach us the necessity of praying, in order to our receiving favour, that Christ put that strange question to the blind men, *What would ye that I should do unto you?* He knew what they would have, but those that touch the top of the golden scepter must be ready to tell, *What is their petition, and what is their request*.

(4.) Let not any other business hinder our saying what we have to say to God. We have business with a friend perhaps, but we cannot do it because we have not leisure; we have something else to do, which we think more needful. But we cannot say so concerning the business we have to do with God; for that is without doubt the *one thing needful*, to which every thing else must be made to give way. It is not at all necessary to our happiness that we be great in the world, or raise estates to such a pitch; but it is absolutely necessary that we make our peace with God, that we obtain his favour, and keep ourselves in his love. Therefore no business for the world will serve to excuse our attendance upon God; but on the contrary, the more important our worldly business is, the more need we have to apply ourselves to God by prayer for his blessing upon it, and so to take him along with us in it. The closer we keep to prayer, and to God in prayer, the more will all our affairs prosper.

Shall I prevail with you now to let God frequently hear from you? Let him hear your voice, though it be but *the voice of your breathing*, (Lam.
iii.

iii. 56.) that is a sign of life: tho' it be the voice of *your groanings*, and those so weak that they *cannot be uttered*, Rom. 8. 26. Speak to him, tho' it be in a broken language, as *Hezekiah* did; *Like a crane or a swallow so did I chatter*, Isa. 38. 14. Speak often to him; he is always within hearing. Hear him speaking to *you*, and have an eye to that in every thing you say to *him*; as when you write an answer to a letter of business you lay it before you. God's word must be the guide of your desires, and the ground of your expectations in prayer; nor can you expect he should give a gracious ear to what you say to him, if you turn a deaf ear to what he saith to you.

You see you have frequent occasion to speak with God, and therefore are concerned to grow in your acquaintance with him; to take heed of doing any thing to displease him; and to strengthen your interest in the Lord Jesus, thro' whom alone it is that you have access with boldness to him. Keep your voice in tune for prayer, and let all your language be a *pure language*, that you may be fit to call on the name of the Lord, *Zeph. 3. 9.* And in every prayer remember you are speaking to God, and make it to appear you have an awe of him upon your spirits. Let us not be *rash with our mouth, nor hasty to utter any thing before God*, but let every word be well weighed, because *God is in heaven, and we upon earth*, Eccl. 5. 2. And if he had not invited and encouraged us to do it, it had been unpardonable presumption for such sinful worms as we are to speak to the Lord of Glory. And we are concerned to speak from the heart, heartily, for it is for our lives, and for the lives of our souls that we are speaking to him.

2. We must *direct our prayer* unto God.

He must not only hear our voice, but we must with deliberation and design address ourselves to him. In the original it is no more but *I will direct*
unto

unto thee. It might be supplied, I will direct my Soul unto thee, agreeing with *Psal.* 25. 1. Or, I will direct my *affections* to thee. Our translation supplies it very well, I will direct *my prayer* unto thee. That is,

1.) When I pray to thee I will *direct* my prayers; and then it notes a fixedness of thought, and a close application of mind, to the duty of prayer. We must go about it solemnly, as those that have something of moment much at heart, and much in view therein, and therefore dare not trifle in it. When we go to pray we must not give *the sacrifice of fools* that think not either what is to be done, or what is to be gained, but speak the words of the wise, who aim at some good end in what they say, and suit it to that end. We must have in our eye God's glory, and our own true happiness; and so well ordered is the covenant of grace, that God has been pleased therein to unite interests with us, so that in seeking his glory we really and effectually seek our own true interests. This is *directing* the prayer, as he that shoots an arrow at a mark directs it, and with a fixed eye and steady hand takes aim right. This is engaging the heart to approach to God, and in order to that disengaging it from every thing else. If we would direct a prayer to God, we must look off all other things, must gather in our wandring thoughts, must summon them all to give their attendance, for here is work to be done that needs them all, and is well worthy of them all; thus we must be able to say with the Psalmist, *O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed.*

2.) When I direct my prayer, I will direct it to Thee. And so it speaks,

(1.) The sincerity of our habitual intention in prayer. We must not direct our prayer to men, that we may gain praise and applause with them, as the Pharisees did, who proclaimed their devotions

tions as they did their alms, that they might gain a reputation, which they knew how to make a hand of: *Verily they have their reward*; men commend them, but God abhors their pride and hypocrisy. We must not let our prayers run at large, as they did that said, *Who will shew us any good?* nor direct them to the world, courting its smiles, and pursuing its wealth, as those, *Hos. 7. 14. who cried not unto God with their hearts*, because they *assembled themselves for corn and wine*. Let not self, carnal self, be the spring and centre of your prayers, but God. Let the eye of the soul be fixed upon him as your highest end in all your applications to him. Let this be the habitual disposition of your souls, to be to your God for a name and a praise; and let this be your design in all your desires, that God may be glorified; and by this let them all be directed, determined, sanctified, and when need is, over-ruled. Our Saviour hath plainly taught us this, in the first petition of the Lord's prayer; which is, *Hallowed be thy Name*: in that we fix our end, and other things are desired in order to that. It is with an eye to the sanctifying of his name, that we desire his kingdom may come, and his will be done, and that we may be fed, and kept, and pardoned. An habitual aim at God's glory is that sincerity which is our gospel perfection; that single eye which where it is, the whole body, the whole soul is full of light. Thus the prayer is directed to God.

(2.) It speaks the steadiness of our actual regard to God in prayer. We must direct our prayer to God, that is, we must continually think of him, as one with whom we have to do in prayer. We must direct our prayer as we direct our speech, and our letters, to the person we have business with. The Bible is a letter God hath sent to us, prayer is a letter we send to him: it is essential that it be directed,

directed, and material that it be directed right; if it be not, it is in danger of miscarrying. Will you therefore take instructions how to direct to him?

Give him his titles, as you do, when you direct to a person of honour. Address yourselves to him as the Great Jehovah, God over all, blessed for evermore; the King of Kings; and Lord of Lords; as the Lord God gracious and merciful. Let your hearts and mouths be filled with holy adorings and admirings of him, and fasten upon those titles of his, which are proper to strike a holy awe of him upon your minds, that you may worship him with reverence and godly fear. Direct your prayer to him as the God of glory, with whom is terrible Majesty, and whose Greatness is unsearchable, that you may not dare to trifle with him, or to mock him in what you say to him.

Take notice of your relation to him, as his children, and let not that be overlooked and lost in your awful adorations of his glories. A good man recorded it, among his experiences, that such a time in secret prayer, his heart at the beginning of the duty, was much enlarged in giving to God those titles which are awful and tremendous, in calling him the Great, the Mighty and the Terrible God; but going on thus he checked himself with this thought, "And why not My Father?" Christ has, both by his precept and by his pattern, taught us to address ourselves to God as *Our Father*; and the Spirit of adoption teacheth us to cry *Abba, Father*. A son, tho' a prodigal, when he returns and repents, may go to his father, and say unto him, *Father, I have sinned*; and tho' no more worthy to be called a son, yet humbly bold to call him Father. When *Ephraim* bemoans himself as a bullock unaccustomed

tomed to the yoke, God bemoans him as a dear son, as a pleasant child, *Jer.* 31. 18, 20. and if God is not ashamed, let us not be afraid to own the relation.

Direct your prayer to him in heaven. This our Saviour has taught us in the preface to the Lord's prayer, *Our Father which art in heaven*. Not that he is confined to the heavens, or as if the *heaven, or the heaven of heavens* could contain him; but there he is said to have prepared his throne; not only his throne of government by which his kingdom ruleth over all, but his throne of grace, to which we must by faith draw near. We must eye him as God in heaven, in opposition to the gods of the heathens, which dwelt in temples made with hands. Heaven is a high place, and we must address ourselves to him as a God infinitely above us. It is the fountain of light, and to him we must address ourselves as the Father of Lights. It is a place of prospect, and we must see his eye upon us, from thence beholding all the children of men. It is a place of purity, and we must in prayer eye him as a holy God, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. It is the firmament of his power, and we must depend upon him as one to whom power belongs. When our Lord Jesus prayed, he lift up his eyes to heaven, to direct us whence to expect the blessings we need.—Once more: Direct your prayer thro' the Lord Jesus, the only Mediator between God and man. It will certainly miscarry if it be not put into his hand, who is that *other angel* that puts *much incense* to the prayers of the saints, and so perfumed, presents them to the Father, *Rev.* 8. 3. What we ask of the Father must be *in his name*; what we expect from the Father must be by his hand; for he is the *High-Priest of our profession*, that is *ordained for men to offer their gifts*, *Heb.* 5. 1.

3. We

3. We must *look up*. That is,

1.) We must look up *in* our prayers, as those that speak to one above us, infinitely above us; the High and Holy One that inhabiteth eternity; as those that expect every good and perfect gift to come from above, from the Father of Lights; as those that desire in prayer to enter into the Holiest, and to draw near with a true heart. With an eye of faith we must look above the world and every thing in it. What is this world, and all things here below, to one that knows how to put a due estimate upon spiritual blessings in heavenly things by Christ Jesus? The spirit of a man at death *goes upward*, for it returns to God who gave it; and therefore, as mindful of its original, it must in every prayer look upwards, towards its God, towards its home, as having set its affections on things above, wherein it has laid up its treasure. Let us therefore in prayer *lift up our hearts with our hands unto God in the heavens*, Lam. 3. 14. It was anciently usual in some churches for the minister to stir up the people to pray with this word, *Sursum corda*, Up with your hearts. *Unto thee, O Lord, do we lift up our souls*.

2.) We must look up *after* our prayers.

(1.) With an eye of satisfaction and pleasure. Looking up is a sign of cheerfulness, as a downlook is a melancholy one. We must look up as those that having by prayer referred ourselves to God, are easy and well-pleased, and with an entire confidence in his wisdom and goodness patiently expect the issue. *Hannah*, when she had prayed, looked up, looked pleasant: she went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad, 1 Sam. 1. 18. Prayer is hearts-ease to a good christian; and when we have prayed we should look up, as those that through grace have found it so.

(2.) With

(2.) With an eye of observation, what returns God makes to our prayers. We must look up as one that has shot an arrow looks after it to see how near it comes to the mark. We must look within us, and observe what the frame of our spirits is after we have been at prayer, how well satisfied they are with the will of God, and how well disposed to accommodate themselves to it. We must look about us, and observe how Providence works concerning us, that if our prayers be answered, we may return to give thanks; if not, that we may remove what hinders, and may continue waiting. Thus we must *set ourselves upon the tower and watch to see what God will say unto us*, Hab. 2. 1. and we must be ready to hear it, expecting that God will give us an answer of peace, and resolving that we will return no more to folly, *Psf. 85. 8.* Thus must we keep up our communion with God; hoping that whenever we lift up our hearts unto him, he will lift up the light of his countenance upon us. Sometimes the answer is quick: *while they are yet speaking I will hear*; but if it be not, when we have prayed we must wait.

Let us learn thus to direct our prayers, and thus to look up; to be inward with God in every duty; to make heart work of it, or we make nothing of it. Let us not worship in the outward court, when we are commanded and encouraged to enter within the vail.

P A R T II.

We now proceed to observe,

II. The particular Time fixed in the text for this good work is the Morning.

The Psalmist seems to lay an emphasis upon this: *in the morning*, and again *in the morning*; not

not then only, but then to begin. Let that be one of the hours of prayer. Under the law we find that every morning there was a lamb offered in sacrifice, *Exod.* 29. 39. and every morning the priest's burned incense, *Exod.* 30. 7. and the singers stood every morning to thank the Lord, *1 Chron.* 23. 30. And so it was appointed in *Ezekiel's* temple, *Ezek.* 46. 13, 15. By which an intimation was plainly given, that the spiritual sacrifices should be offered by the spiritual priests every morning, as duly as the morning comes. Every christian should pray in secret, and every master of a family with his family morning by morning; and there is good reason for it.

1. The morning is the first part of the day, and it is fit that he that is the first should be first served. The heathen could say, *A Jove principium*; whatever you do, begin with God. The world had its beginning from him, we had ours, and therefore whatever we begin, it concerns us to take him along with us in it. The days of our life, as soon as ever the sun of reason riseth in the soul, should be devoted to God, and employed in his service. *From the womb of the morning* let Christ have *the dew of the youth*, *Psal.* 110. 3. The first-fruits were always to be the Lord's, and the firstlings of the flock. By morning and evening prayer we give glory to him who is the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the First and the Last; with Him we must begin and end the day, who is the Beginning and the End. Wisdom hath said, *Those that seek me early shall find me*; early in their lives, early in the day; for hereby we give to God that which he ought to have, the preference above other things. Hereby we shew that we are in care to please him, and to approve ourselves to him, and that we seek him diligently. What we do earnestly we are
said

said in scripture to do early (as *Psal.* 101. 8.) Industrious men rise betimes. *David* expresseth the strength and warmth of his devotion, when he saith, *O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee*, *Pf.* 63. 1.

2. In the morning we are fresh and lively, and in the best frame. Our spirits are revived with the rest and sleep of the night, we live a kind of new life, and the fatigues of the day before are forgotten. If ever we be good for any thing, it is in the morning; it is therefore become a proverb, *Aurora musis amica*; and if the morning be a friend to the Muses, I am sure it is no less so to the Graces. As he that is the first should have the first, so he that is the best should have the best; and then when we are fittest for business we should apply ourselves to that which is the most needful business. Worshipping God is work that requires the best powers of the soul, when they are at the best; and it well deserves them. How can they be better bestowed, or so as to turn to a better account? *Let all that is within me bless his holy name*, saith *David*, and all little enough. *Awake my glory, awake psaltery and harp, for I myself will awake early*, *Psal.* 37. 8. Then let us *stir up ourselves to take hold on God*.

3. In the morning we are most free from company and business, and ordinarily have the best opportunity for solitude and retirement; unless we be of those *sluggards* that lie in bed with yet a little sleep, a little slumber, till the work of their calling calls them up, with, *How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?* It is the wisdom of those that have so much to do in the world, that they have scarce a minute to themselves of all day, to take time in the morning before business crowds in upon them, for the business of their religion; that they may be intire for it, and therefore the more intent upon it. The apostle intimates how much it

should be our care to *attend upon the Lord without distraction*, 1 Cor. 7. 35. And therefore that one day in seven (and it is the first day too, the morning of the week) which is appointed for holy work, is appointed to be a day of rest from other work. *Abraham* leaves all at the bottom of the hill, when he goes up into the mount to worship God. In the morning therefore let us converse with God, and apply ourselves to the concerns of the other life, before we are entangled in the affairs of this life. Our Lord Jesus has set us an example of this, who because his day was wholly filled up with public business for God and the souls of men *rose up in the morning a great while before day*, and before company came in, *and went out into a solitary place, and there prayed*, Mark. 1. 35.

4. In the morning we have received fresh mercies from God, which we are concerned to acknowledge with thankfulness to his praise. He is continually doing us good, and loading us with his benefits. Every day we have reason to bless him, for every day he is blessing us; in the morning particularly; and therefore as he is giving out to us the fruits of his favour, which are said to be *new every morning*, so we should be still returning the expressions of our gratitude to him, and of other pious and devout affections, which (like the fire on the altar) must be new every morning also.

Have we had a good night? and have we not an errand to the throne of grace to return thanks for it? How many mercies concurred to make it a good night! distinguishing mercies granted to us, but denied to others! Many have not where to lay their heads, our master himself had not; *the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head*; but we have houses to dwell in, quiet and peace-

peaceable habitations, perhaps stately ones. We have beds to lie in, warm and easy ones; perhaps *beds of ivory*, fine ones; such as they stretched themselves upon that were at *ease in Zion*; and are not put to wander in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth, as some of the best of God's saints have been forced to do, of whom the world was not worthy. Many have beds to lie on, yet dare not, or cannot lie down in them, being kept up either by the sickness of their friends, or the fear of their enemies. But we have laid us down, and there have been none to make us afraid; no alarms of the sword, either of war or persecution. Many lay them down and cannot sleep, but are *full of tossings to and fro until the dawning of the day*, thro' pain of body or anguish of mind. Wearisome nights are appointed to them, and their eyes are held waking; but we have laid us down and slept without any disturbance, and our sleep was sweet and refreshing; the pleasant parenthesis of our cares and toils. It is God that has *given us sleep, as he gives it to his beloved*. Many lay them down and sleep, and never rise again; they sleep the sleep of death, and their beds are their graves; but we have slept and awaked again, have rested, and are refreshed; *because the Lord hath sustained us*, Psal. 3. 5. Have we a pleasant morning? Is the light sweet to us? Doth the Light of the sun, and of the eyes, rejoice the heart? and ought we not to own our obligations to him who opens our eyes, and opens the eye-lids of the morning upon us? Have we clothes to put on in the morning, *garments that are warm upon us*? Change of raiment, not for necessity only, but for ornament? we have them from God. It is *his wool* and *his flax* that is given to cover our nakedness; and the morning when we dress ourselves is the proper time of returning him thanks for it. Are we in health and at ease?

Have we been long so? We ought to be as thankful for a constant series of mercies, as for particular instances of mercy, especially considering how many are sick and in pain, and how much we have deserved to be so.

Perhaps we have experienced some special mercy to ourselves or our families, in preservation from fire or thieves; from dangers we have been aware of, and many more unseen. *Weeping perhaps endured for a night, and joy came in the morning*, and that calls aloud upon us to own the goodness of God. The destroying angel perhaps has been abroad, and the arrow that flies at midnight, and wasteth in darkness, has been shot in at others windows, but our houses have been passed over. Thanks be to God for the blood of the covenant sprinkled upon our door-posts; and for the ministration of the good angels about us, to which we owe it that we have been preserved from the malice of the evil angels against us, those rulers of the darkness of this world, who perhaps creep forth like the beasts of prey, when he maketh darkness and it is dark. All the glory be to the God of angels.

5. In the morning we have fresh matter ministered to us for adoration of the greatness and glory of God. We ought to take notice not only of the gifts of God's bounty to *us*, which we have the comfort and benefit of; they are little narrow souls that confine their regards to them; but we ought to observe the more general instances of his wisdom and power in the kingdom of providence, which redound to his honour, and the common good of the universe. The 19th psalm seems to have been a morning meditation, in which we are directed to observe how *the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work*; and to own not only the advantage we receive from their light and influence, but the honour they

they do to him who stretched out the heavens like a curtain, fixed their pillars, and established their ordinances, according to which they *continue to this day*, for they are *all his servants*. *Day unto day utters this speech, and night unto night sheweth this knowledge*, even the eternal power and godhead of the great Creator of the world, and its great Ruler. The regular and constant succession and revolution of light and darkness, according to the original contract made between them, that they should reign alternately, may serve to confirm our faith, in that part of divine revelation which gives us the history of the creation, and the promise of God to *Noah* and his sons, *Gen. 8. 22*. His covenant with the day and with the night, *Jer. 33. 20*.

Look up in the morning and see how exactly *the day-spring knows its place*, knows its time, and keeps them: look up and see *the sun as a bridegroom* richly dressed, and greatly pleased, coming out of his chamber, and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race. Observe how bright his beams are, how sweet his smiles, how strong his influences: and if there be *no speech or language, where their voice is not heard*, the voice of these natural immortal preachers, proclaiming the glory of God, it is pity there should be any speech or language where the voice of his worshippers should not be heard, echoing to the voice of those preachers, and ascribing glory to him who thus makes the morning and evening to rejoice. But whatever others do, let him *bear our voice* to this purpose in the morning, and in the morning let us direct our praises unto him.

6. In the morning we have, or should have had fresh thoughts of God, and sweet meditations on his name, and those we ought to offer up to him in prayer. Have we been, according to *David's* example, remembering God upon our beds, and

meditating upon him in the night watches? When we awake, can we say as he did, we are still with God? If so, we have a good errand to the throne of grace, by the words of our mouths to offer up to God the meditations of our hearts, and it will be to him a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour. If the heart has been inditing a good matter, let the tongue be as the pen of a ready writer, to pour it out before God. We have the word of God to converse with, and we ought to read a portion of it every morning: by it God speaks to us, and in it we ought to meditate day and night; which if we do, that will send us to the throne of grace, and furnish us with many a good errand there. If God in the morning by his grace direct his word to us, so as to make it reach our hearts, that will engage us to direct our prayer to him.

7. In the morning, it is to be feared, we find cause to reflect upon many vain and sinful thoughts that have been in our minds in the night-season; and upon that account it is necessary we address ourselves to God by prayer in the morning, for the pardon of them. The Lord's Prayer seems to be calculated primarily in the letter of it, for the morning; for we are taught to pray for our daily bread *this day*: and yet we are then to pray, *forgive us our trespasses*; for as in the hurry of the day we contract guilt by our irregular words and actions, so we do in the solitude of the night by our corrupt imaginations, and the wanderings of an un sanctified ungoverned fancy. It is certain, *The thought of foolishness is sin*, Prov. 24. 9. Foolish thoughts are sinful thoughts; the first-born of the old man, the first beginnings of all sin; and how many of these vain thoughts lodge within us wherever we lodge! who can understand these errors? They are more than the hairs of our head. We read of those that *work evil upon their beds*, because there

there they devise it; and when the morning is light they practise it, *Micah* 2. 1. How often in the night-season is the mind disquieted and distracted with distrustful careful thoughts; polluted with unchaste and wanton thoughts; intoxicated with proud aspiring thoughts; soured and leavened with malicious revengeful thoughts; or at the best diverted from devout and pious thoughts by a thousand impertinences. Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, which lie down with us, and rise up with us; for out of that corrupt fountain, which wherever we go we carry about with us, these streams naturally flow. Yea, and in the *multitude of dreams*, as well as in many *words* there are also *divers vanities*, *Eccl.* 5. 2. And dare we go abroad till we have renewed our repentance, which we are every night as well as every day thus making work for? Are we not concerned to confess to him that knows our hearts, their wanderings from him, to complain of them to him as revolting and rebellious hearts, and bent to backslide; to make our peace in the blood of Christ, and to pray, that the thought of our heart may be forgiven us? we cannot with safety go into the business of the day under the guilt of any sin unrepented of, or unpardoned.

8. In the morning we are addressing ourselves to the work of the day, and therefore are concerned by prayer to seek unto God for his presence and blessing. We come, and are encouraged to come *boldly to the throne of grace*, not only for *mercy* to pardon what has been amiss, but for *grace to help in every time of need*: and what time is it that is not a time of need with us? And therefore what morning should pass without morning-prayer? We read of that *which the duty of every day requires*, *Ezr.* 3. 4. and in reference to that we must go to God every morning, to pray for the gracious

disposals of his Providence concerning us, and the gracious operations of his Spirit upon us.

We have families to look after, it may be, and to provide for, and are in care to do well for them; let us every morning by prayer commit them to God, put them under the conduct and government of his grace, and then we effectually put them under the care and protection of his Providence. Holy Job *rose up early in the morning to offer burnt-offerings for his children*, and we should do so to offer up prayers and supplications for them, *according to the number of them all*, Job 1. 5. Thus we cause the blessing to rest on our houses.—We are going about the business of our callings, perhaps; let us look up to God in the first place for wisdom and grace to manage them well, in the fear of God, and to *abide with him* in them; and then we may in faith beg of him to prosper and succeed us in them, to strengthen us for the services of them, to support us under the fatigues of them, to direct the designs of them, and to give us comfort in the gains of them.—We have journies to go, it may be; let us look up to God for his presence with us, and go no whither, where we cannot in faith beg of God to go with us.—We have a prospect perhaps of opportunities for doing or getting good; let us look up to God for a *heart* to every *price in our hands*, for skill, and will, and courage to improve it, that it may not be as a *price in the hand of a fool*.—Every day has its temptations too; some perhaps we foresee, but there may be many more that we think not of, and are therefore concerned to be earnest with God that we may *not be led into any temptation*, but guarded against every one; that whatever company we come into, we may have wisdom to do good, and no hurt to them; and to get good, and no hurt by them.—*We know not what a day may bring forth*. We little think

think in the morning what tidings we may hear, and what events may befall us before night, and should therefore beg of God, grace to carry us thro' the duties and difficulties which we do not foresee, as well as those which we do; that in order to our standing compleat in all the will of God, *as the day is, so the strength may be.* We shall find that *sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof,* and that therefore as it is folly to *take thought for to-morrow's* event, so it is wisdom to take thought for to day's duty, that sufficient unto this day, and the duty of it, may be the supplies of the Divine Grace, thoroughly to furnish us for every good word and work, and thoroughly to fortify us against every evil word and work; that we may not think, or speak, or do any thing all day, which we may have cause on any account to wish unthought, unspoke, and undone again at night.

APPLICATION.

1. Let this word put us in mind of our omissions; for omissions are sins, and must come into judgment. How often has our morning-worship been either neglected or negligently performed. The work has been either not done at all, or done *deceitfully*; either no sacrifice at all brought, or it has been *the torn* and *the lame*, and *the sick*; either no prayer, or the prayer not *directed* aright, nor *lifted up*. We have had the morning's mercies, God has not been wanting in the compassion and care of a father for us, yet we have not done the morning's service, but have been shamefully wanting in the duty of children to him. Let us be truly humbled before God this morning for our sin and folly herein, that we have so often robbed God of the honour, and ourselves of the benefit of our morning-worship. God hath come
into

into our closets, *seeking* this fruit, but has *found none*, or next to none; hath *hearkened and heard*, but either we spake not to him at all, or *spake not aright*. Some trifling thing or other has served for an excuse to put it by once, and when once the good usage has been broken in upon, conscience has been wounded, and its bonds weakened, and we have grown more and more cool to it, and perhaps by degrees it has been quite left off.

2. I beseech you, suffer a word of exhortation concerning this. I know what an influence it would have upon the prosperity of your souls to be constant and sincere in your secret worship, and therefore give me leave to press it upon you with all earnestness. Let God hear from you every morning, every morning let your prayer be directed to him, and look up.

1.) Make conscience of your secret worship. Keep it up, not only because it has been a *custom* you have received by tradition from your fathers, but because it is a *duty*, concerning which you have received commandment from the Lord. Keep up stated times for it, and be true to them. Let those that have hitherto lived in the total neglect, or in the frequent omission of secret prayer, be persuaded from henceforward to look upon it as the most needful part of their daily business, and the most delightful part of their daily comfort, and do it accordingly with a constant care, and yet with a constant pleasure. No persons that have the use of their reason, can pretend an exemption from this duty. What is said to some is said to all, *Pray always, continue in prayer, and watch in the same*. Rich people are not so much bound to labour with their hands as the poor; poor people are not so much bound to give alms as the rich; but both are equally bound to pray. The rich are not above the necessity of the duty,
nor

nor the poor below acceptance with God in it. It is not too soon for the youngest to begin to pray; and those whom the multitude of years has taught wisdom, yet at their end will be fools, if they think they have now no further occasion for prayer.

Let none plead *they cannot pray*. If you were ready to perish with hunger, you could beg and pray for food; and if you see yourselves undone by reason of sin, can you not beg and pray for mercy and grace? Art thou a christian? Never for shame say, thou canst not pray, for that is as absurd as for a soldier to say, he knows not how to handle a sword, or a carpenter an ax. What are you called for into the fellowship of Christ, but that by him you may have fellowship with God? If you cannot pray so well as others, pray as well as you can, and God will accept of you.

Let none plead they have not time in a morning for prayer. You can find time for other things that are less needful. You had better take time from sleep, than want time for prayer. And how can you spend your time better, and more to your satisfaction and advantage? All the business of the day will prosper the better, for your beginning it thus with God.

Let none plead that they have not a convenient place to be private in for this work. *Isaac* retired into the field to pray; and the psalmist could be alone with God in a *corner of the house-top*. If you cannot perform it with so much secrecy as you would, yet perform it; it is doing it with ostentation, that is the fault, not doing it under observation, when it cannot be avoided. I remember, when I was a young man coming up hither to *London* in the stage-coach, in king *James's* time, there happened to be a gentleman in the company, that then was not afraid to own himself

himself a Jesuit. Many rencounters he and I had upon the road, and this was one. He was praising the custom in popish countries, of keeping the church doors always open, for people to go into at any time to say their prayers: I told him it looked too like the practice of the pharisees, that prayed in the synagogues; and did not agree with Christ's command, *Thou when thou prayest thyself, enter not into the church with the doors open, but into thy closet and shut thy doors*. When he was pressed with that argument, he replied with some vehemence, "I believe, you protestants say
 " your prayers nowhere; for I have travelled a
 " great deal in the coach in company with pro-
 " testants, have often lain at inns in the same
 " room with them, and have carefully watched
 " them, and could never perceive that any of
 " them said his prayers night or morning but
 " one, and he was a *Presbyterian*." I hope there was more malice than truth in what he said: but I mention it as an intimation, that tho' we cannot be so private as we would be in our devotions, yet we must not omit them, lest the omission should prove not a sin only, but a scandal.

2. Make a business of your secret worship, and *be not slothful in this business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*. Take heed lest it degenerate into a form, and you grow customary in your accustomed services. Go about the duty solemnly: be inward with God in it. It is not enough to *say* your prayers, but you must *pray* your prayers; must pray in praying, as *Elijah* did, *James* 5. 17. Let us learn to *labour fervently in prayer*, as *Epaphras* did, *Col.* 4. 12. and we shall find it is the hand of the diligent in this duty that maketh rich. God looks not at the length of your prayers, nor shall you be heard for your much speaking, or fine speaking; but God requires truth in the inward part,

part, and it is the prayer of the upright that is his delight. When you have prayed, look upon yourselves as thereby engaged and encouraged, both to serve God and to trust in him; that the comfort and benefit of your morning devotions may not be as the *morning cloud which passeth away*, but as the *morning light which shines more and more*.

S E R M O N VI.

Directions for spending the Day with God.

PSALM XXV. 5.

— On thee do I wait all the Day.

WHICH of us is there that can truly say thus? That lives this life of communion with God, which is so much our business, and so much our blessedness? However, *David's* profession in the text shews us what should be our practice; on God we must wait all the day. That denotes two things, a patient expectation, and a constant attendance.

I. It speaks a patient expectation of his coming to us in a way of mercy; and then, all the day must be taken *figuratively*, for all the time that the desired mercy is delayed. *David*, in the former part of the verse, prayed for divine conduct and instruction, Lead me in thy truth and teach me. He was at a loss, tho' very desirous to know

know what God would have him to do, and was ready to do it; but God kept him in suspense; he was not yet clear what was the mind and will of God, and what course he should steer; will he therefore proceed without divine direction? No, *On thee I will wait all the day*, as *Abram* attended on his sacrifice from morning till the sun went down, before God gave him an answer to his enquiries concerning his seed, *Gen. 15. 5, 12.* and as *Habakkuk* stood upon his watch-tower to see what answer God would give him, when he consulted his oracle: tho' it do not come presently, yet *at the end it shall speak and not lie; tho' it tarry, wait for it.*

David, in the words next before the text, had called God the God of his salvation, from whom he expected deliverance out of his present distresses, those troubles of his heart that were enlarged, *v. 17.* and out of the hands of those enemies that were ready to triumph over him, *v. 2.* Hoping that God will be his Saviour, he resolves to wait on him all the day, like a genuine son of *Jacob*, whose dying profession it was, *I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.* Sometimes God prevents his people with the blessings of his goodness; before they call he answers them. But at other times he seems to stand afar off, he delays the deliverance, and keeps them long in expectation of it, and in suspense about it. The whole day is cloudy and dark. The deliverance of the church out of her troubles, the success of her struggles and rest from them, is what we must continue humbly waiting upon God for without distrust or impatience. We must wait all the day.

1.) Tho' it be a long day: tho' we be kept waiting a great while, quite beyond our own expectation: tho' it be a long day, it is but a day, and it is known to the Lord, *Zeck. 14. 7.* It seems

seems long while we are kept waiting, but the happy issue will enable us to reflect upon it as short, and but for a moment. It is no longer than God hath appointed, and we are sure his time is the best time; and his favours are worth waiting for. The time is long, but it is nothing to the days of eternity, when those that had long patience shall be recompensed for it with an everlasting salvation.

2.) Tho' it be a dark day, yet let us wait upon God all the day. Tho' while we are kept waiting for what God will do, we are kept in the dark concerning what he is doing, and what is best for us to do, yet let us be content to wait in the dark. Tho' we *see not our signs*, and tho' there is none to tell us how long, yet let us resolve to wait, how long soever it be; for tho' what God doth we know not now, we shall know hereafter, when the mystery of God shall be finished. Never was man more at a loss concerning God's dealings with him than poor Job was, ch. 23. 8, 9. *I go forward, but he is not there; backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand, on the right hand, but I cannot see him*: yet he sits down, v. 10. resolving to wait on God all the day, with a satisfaction in this, that tho' I know not the way that He takes, *He knows the way that I take*, and *when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold*, approved, and improved. He sits by as a refiner, and will take care that the gold be in the furnace no longer than is needful for the refining of it. When God's way is in the sea, so that he cannot be traced, we are sure also *his way is in the sanctuary*, so that he may be trusted, see Psalm 77. 13, 19. And when clouds and darkness are round about him, yet even then justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.

3.) Tho' it be a stormy day, yet we must wait upon God all the day. Tho' we are not only becalmed, and do not get forward, but tho' the
wind

wind be contrary, and drive us back ; nay, tho' it be boisterous, and the church be tossed with tempests, and ready to sink, yet we must hope the best ; yet we must wait, and weather the storm by patience. It is some comfort, that Christ is in the ship : the churches cause is Christ's own cause, he has espoused it, and he will own it. He is embarked in the same bottom with his people, and therefore, *Why are you fearful ?* Doubt not but the ship will come safe to land ; tho' Christ seem for the present to be asleep, the prayers of his disciples will awake him, and he will *rebuke the winds and the waves*. Yet this is not all, Christ is not only in the ship, but at the helm ; whatever threatens the church is ordered by the Lord Jesus, and shall be made to work for its good. This is a seasonable word at this day. What God will do with us we cannot tell ; but this we are sure, He is a God of judgment, infinitely wise and just, and therefore, *Blessed are all they that wait for him*. He will do his own work in his own way and time ; and tho' we be hurried back into the wilderness when we thought we had been upon the borders of *Canaan*, we suffer justly for our unbelief and murmurings, but God acts wisely, and will be found faithful to his promise. His time to judge for his people, and to *repent himself concerning his servants*, is when he sees that *their strength is gone*. This was seen of old in the mount of the Lord, and shall be seen again. Let us therefore continue in a waiting frame. Hold out faith and patience, for *it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord*.

2. This waiting upon God denotes a constant attendance upon him in a way of duty. And so we understand *the day* literally. It was *David's* practice to wait upon God *all the day*. The

Hebrew signifies both *every day* and *all the day long*. It is the same with that command, *Prov. 23. 17.* Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

It is not enough for us to begin every day with God, but on him we must wait every day, and all the day long. For the opening of this I must shew,

I. What it is to wait upon God: And

II. The constancy with which we must do it.

I. Let us enquire what it is to wait on God. You have heard how much it is our duty in the morning to speak to him, in solemn prayer. But have we then done with him for all day? No, we must still be waiting on him; as one to whom we stand very nearly related, and very strongly obliged. To wait on God is to live a life of desire towards him, delight in him, dependence on him, and devotedness to him.

1. It is to live a life of *desire* towards God: to wait on him, as the beggar waits on his benefactor, with earnest desire to receive supplies from him; as the sick and sore in *Bethesda's* pool waited for the stirring of the water, and attended in the porches with desire to be helped in and healed. When the prophet had said, *Lord, in the way of thy judgments we have waited for thee*, he explained himself thus in the next words, *the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee*; and *with my soul have I desired thee*, *Isa. 26. 8, 9.* Our desire must be not only towards the good things that God gives, but towards God himself; his favour and love, the manifestation of his name to us, and the influences of his grace upon us. Then we wait on God, when our souls pant after him, and his favour, when we thirst for God, for the living God. "O that I may behold the beauty of the Lord! O that I may taste his goodness! O that I may bear his image, and be entirely con-

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formed

formed to his will! For there is none in heaven or earth, that I can desire in comparison of him. O that I may know him more, and love him better, and be brought nearer to him, and made fitter for him." Thus upon the wings of holy desire should our souls be still soaring upwards towards God, still pressing forwards towards heaven. We must not only pray solemnly in the morning, but that desire which is the life and soul of prayer, like the fire upon the altar, must be kept continually burning, ready for the sacrifices that are to be offered upon it. The bent and bias of the soul in all its motions must be towards God; the serving of him in all we do, and the enjoying of him in all we have. And this is principally intended in the commands given us to *pray always*, to *pray without ceasing*. Even when we are not making actual addresses to God, yet we must have habitual inclinations towards him; as a man in health, tho' he is not always eating, yet has always a disposition in him towards the nourishments and delights of the body.

2. It is to live a life of *delight* in God. Desire is love in motion, as a bird upon the wing; delight is love at rest, as a bird upon the nest. Now tho' our desire must still be so towards God, as that we must be wishing for more of God, yet our delight must be so in God, as that we must never wish for more than God. Believing him to be a God all-sufficient, in him we must be entirely satisfied. "Let him be mine, and I have enough." Do we love to love God? Is it a pleasure to us to think that there is a God? that he is such a one as he has revealed himself to be? that he is our God by creation to dispose of us as he pleaseth? our God in covenant to dispose of all for the best to us? this is waiting on our God. Something or other the soul has that it values itself by, something

thing or other that it reposes itself in. And what is it? God or the world? What is it that we pride ourselves in? which we make the matter of our boasting? It is the character of worldly people, that they *boast themselves* in the multitude of their *riches*, and of their own *might*, and the power of their own hands, which they think has *gotten them this wealth*. It is the character of godly people, that *in God they boast all the day long*, Ps. 44. 8. 49. 6. That is waiting on God; having our eye always upon him with a secret complacency, as men have upon that which is their glory, and which they glory in. What is it that we please ourselves with? which we embrace with the greatest satisfaction, in having which we hug ourselves, as having all we would have? The worldly man, when his barns are full of corn, *saith, Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry*. The godly man can never say so till he finds his heart full of God, and Christ, and Grace; and then, *Return unto thy rest, O my soul: here repose thyself*. The gracious soul *dwells in God*, is at home in him, and there *dwells at ease*; is in him perpetually pleased; and whatever he meets with in the world to make him uneasy, he finds enough in God to balance it.

3. It is to live a life of *dependence* on God, as the child waits on his father, whom he has a confidence in, and on whom he casts all his care. To wait on God is to expect all good to come to us from him, as the worker of all good for us, and in us, the giver of all good to us, and the protector of us from all evil. Thus *David* explains himself, Ps. 62. 5. *My soul, wait thou only upon God*, and continue still to do so, for *my expectation is from him*. I look not to any other for the good I need; for I know that every creature is that to me, and no more than he makes it to be, and from him *every man's judgment proceeds*. Shall we

lift up our eyes to the hills? Doth our help come from thence? Doth the dew that waters the vallies come no further than the tops of the hills? Shall we go higher, and lift up our eyes to the heavens, to the clouds? Can they of themselves give rain? No; If God hear not the heavens, they hear not the earth; we must therefore look above the heavens; for all our help cometh from the Lord. It was the acknowledgment of a King, and no good one neither, *If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee, out of the barn-floor, or out of the wine-press?* Our expectations from God, as far as they are guided by, and grounded upon the word which he hath spoken, ought to be humbly confident, and with a full assurance of faith. We must know and be sure that no word of God shall fall to the ground, that the expectation of the poor shall not perish. Worldly people say to their gold, *Thou art my hope; and to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence, and the rich man's wealth is his strong city:* But God is the only refuge and portion of the godly man here in the land of the living: it is to him only that he saith, and he saith it with a holy boldness, *Thou art my hope and my confidence.* The eyes of all things wait on him; for he is good to all; but the eyes of his saints especially, for he is in a peculiar manner *good to Israel;* they know his name, and therefore will trust and triumph in him, as those that know they shall not be made ashamed of their hope.

4. It is to live a life of *devotedness* to God, as the servant waits on his master, ready to observe his will, and to do his work, and in every thing to consult his honour and interest. To wait on God is entirely and unreservedly to refer ourselves to his wise and holy directions and disposals, and cheerfully to acquiesce in them, and comply with them.

them. The servant that waits on his master chuseth not his own way, but follows his master step by step: Thus must we wait on God as those that have no will of our own, but what is wholly resolved into his. It is the character of the redeemed of the Lord, that they *follow the Lamb wheresoever he goes*, with an implicit faith and obedience. *As the eyes of a servant are to the hand of his master, and the eyes of a maiden to the hand of her mistress, so must our eyes wait on the Lord*, to do what he appoints, to take what he allots for us. *Father, thy will be done*; master, thy will be done. The servant waits on his master, not only to do him service, but to do him honour; and thus must we wait on God, that we may be to him *for a name, and for a praise*. His glory must be our ultimate end, to which we, and all we are, have, and can do, must be dedicated. We wear his livery, attend in his courts, and follow his motions as his servants, for this end, *that he may in all things be glorified*.

To wait on God is to make his will our rule.

1.) To make the will of his *precept* the rule of our *practice*, and to do every duty with an eye to that. We must wait on him to receive his commands, with a resolution to comply with them, how much soever they may contradict our corrupt inclinations or secular interest. We must wait on him as the holy angels do that always behold the face of their Father, as those that are at his call, and ready to go upon the least intimation of his will, wherever he sends them. Thus we must do the will of God, as the angels do it that are in heaven, those ministers of his that do his pleasure, and are always about his throne in order to it, never out of the way. *David* here prays, that God would *shew him his way*, and lead him, and teach him, and keep him, and forward him in the

way of his duty; and so the text comes in as a plea to enforce that petition, *for on thee do I wait all the day*; ready to receive the law from thy mouth, and in every thing to observe thine orders. And then it intimates this, that those, and those only, can expect to be taught of God, who are ready and willing to do as they are taught. If any man will *do his will*, be steadfastly resolved in the strength of his Grace to comply with it, he *shall know* what his will is. *David* prays, Lord, *Give me understanding*, and then promiseth himself, *I shall keep thy law*, yea, I shall observe it; as the servant that waits on his master. They that go up to the house of the Lord, with an expectation that he will teach them his ways, must do it with a humble resolution, that they will *walk in his paths*, *Isaiah* 2. 3. “ Lord, let the pillar of cloud and fire go before me, for I am determined with full purpose of heart to follow it, and thus to wait on my God all the day.”

2.) To make the will of his *Providence* the rule of our *patience*, and to bear every affliction with an eye to that. We are sure it is God that performeth all things for us, and he performeth the thing that is appointed for us. We are as sure that all is well that God doth, and shall be made to work for good to all that love him; and in order to that we ought to acquiesce in, and accommodate ourselves to the whole will of God. To wait on the Lord, is to say, *It is the Lord, let him do to me as seemeth good to him*; because nothing seemeth good to him but what is really good; and so we shall see it, when God's work appears in a full light. It is to say, *Not as I will, but as thou wilt*; for *should it be according to my mind*? It is to bring our mind to our condition in every thing, so as to keep that calm and easy, whatever happens to make us uneasy. And we must therefore

fore bear the affliction, whatever it is; *because* it is the will of God; it is what he has allotted us, who doth all according to the counsel of his own will. This is christian patience. I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, not because it was to no purpose to complain, but because *thou didst it*, and therefore I had no reason to complain. And this will reconcile us to every affliction, one as well as another, because whatever it is, it is the will of God, and in compliance with that we must not only be *silent*, because of the sovereignty of his will, (woe unto him that strives with his Maker;) but we must be *satisfied*, because of the wisdom and goodness of it. Whatever the disposals of God's providence may be concerning those that wait on him, we may be sure that as he doth them no wrong, so he means them no hurt. Nay, they may say as the Psalmist did, even when he was plagued all the day long, and chastened every morning, however it be, yet *God is good*, and therefore, tho' he slay me, yet will I trust in him, yet will I wait on him.

I might open this duty of waiting on God by other scripture expressions which speak the same thing, and are, as this is, comprehensive of a great part of that homage, which we are bound to pay to him, and that communion which it is our interest to keep up with him. Truly thus our fellowship is with the Father, and with the Son Jesus Christ.—It is to *set God always before us*, Psalm 16. 8. To look upon him as one always near us, always at our right hand, and that has his eye upon us wherever we are, and whatever we are doing; nay, as one in whom we live, and move, and have our being; with whom we have to do, and to whom we are accountable. This is pressed upon us, as the great principle of gospel obedience. *Walk before me, and be thou perfect or*
P 4 upright;

upright; herein consists that uprightness which is our evangelical perfection, in walking at all times as before God, and studying to approve ourselves to him.—It is to *have our eyes ever towards the Lord*, as it follows here, *v. 15.* Tho' we cannot see him by reason of our present distance and darkness, yet we must look towards him, towards the place where his honour dwells; as those that desire the knowledge of him and his will, and direct all to his honour as the mark we aim at; *labouring* in this, that whether present or absent we may be *accepted of him*. To wait on him, is to follow him with our eye in all those things wherein he is pleased to manifest himself, and to admit the discoveries of his being and perfections.—It is to *acknowledge God in all our ways*, Prov. 3. 6. In all the actions, and in all the affairs of life, we must walk in his hand, and set ourselves in the way of his steps. In all our undertakings, we must wait upon him for direction and success, and by faith and prayer commit our way to him to undertake for us; and him we must take with us wherever we go. *If thy presence go not up with us, carry us not up hence.* In all our comforts we must see his hand giving them out to us, and in all our crosses we must see the same hand laying them upon us, that we may learn to receive both good and evil, and to bless the name of the Lord both when he gives, and when he takes.—It is to *follow the Lord fully*, as *Caleb* did, Numb. 14. 24. or to *fulfil after the Lord*, as the word is; to have respect to all his commandments, and to study to stand compleat in his whole will. Wherever God leads us, and goes before us, we must be followers of him as dear children, must follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes, and take him for our guide whithersoever we go. This is to wait on God; and those that do so may chearfully wait *for him*, for he

he will without fail appear in due time to their joy, and that word of *Solomon* shall be made good to them, He that waits on his master shall be honoured. Christ has said, Where I am, there shall also my servant be. Having shewed you what it is to wait on God, I come next to shew,

II. That this we must do every day, and all the day long.

1. We must wait on our God *every day*. Some read it *omni die*. This is work which the *duty of every day requires*. Servants in the courts of princes have their weeks or months of waiting appointed them, and are tied to attend only at certain times. But God's servants must never be out of waiting: all the days of our appointed time, the time of our work and warfare here on earth, we must be waiting, and not desire or expect to be discharged from this attendance, till we come to heaven, where we shall wait on God, as angels do, more nearly and constantly.—We must wait on God every day.

1.) Both on sabbath-days, and on week-days. The Lord's day is instituted on purpose for our attendance on God in the courts of his house; there we must wait on him to give glory to him, and to receive both commands and favours from him. Ministers must then *wait on their ministry*, and people must wait on it too, saying as *Cornelius* for himself and his friends, *Now we are all here ready before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God*, Acts 10. 33. It is for the honour of God to help to fill up the assemblies of those that attend at the foot-stool of his throne, and to add to their number. The whole sabbath-time, except what is taken up in works of necessity and mercy, must be employed in waiting on our God. Christians are spiritual priests, and as such it is their business to wait in God's house at the time appointed.

appointed.—But that is not enough; we must wait upon our God on week-days too, for every day of the week we want mercy from him, and have work do for him. Our waiting upon him in publick ordinances on the first day of the week is designed to fix us to, and fit us for communion with him all the week after; so that we answer not the intentions of the sabbath, unless the impressions of it abide upon us, and go with us into the business of the week, and be kept always in the imagination of the thought of our heart. Thus *from one sabbath to another*, and *from one new moon to another*, we must keep in a holy gracious frame; must be so *in the Spirit on the Lord's day*, as to *walk in the Spirit* all the week.

2.) Both on leisure days and busy days we must be found waiting on God. Some days of our lives are days of labour and hurry, when our particular calling requires our close and diligent application; but we must not think that will excuse us from our constant attendance on God. Even then when our hands are working about the world, our hearts may be waiting on our God, by an habitual regard to him, to his Providence as our guide, and his glory as our end in our worldly business; and thus we must *abide with him therein*. Those that rise up early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness in pursuit of the world, yet are concerned to wait on God, because otherwise all their care and pains will signify nothing; it is labour in vain, *Psf. 127. 1, 2.* nay, it is labour in the fire.—Some days of our lives we relax from business, and take our ease. Many of you have your time for diversion, but then when you lay aside other business, this of waiting upon God must not be laid aside. When you prove yourselves with mirth, as *Solomon* did, and say, *you will enjoy pleasure a little*, yet let this *wisdom remain with you*,
Eccl.

Eccl. 2. 1, 3. let your eye be then up to God, and take heed of dropping your communion with him, in that which you call an agreeable conversation with your friends. Whether it be a day of work, or a day of rest, we shall find nothing like waiting upon God, both to lighten the toil of our work, and to sweeten the comfort of our repose. So that whether we have much to do, or little to do in the world, still we must wait upon God, that we may be kept from the temptation that attends both the one and the other.

3.) Both in days of prosperity, and in days of adversity, we must be found waiting upon God. Doth the world smile upon us, and court us? yet let us not turn from attending on God to make our court to it. If we have never so much of the wealth of the world, yet we cannot say we have no need of God, no further occasion to make use of him. *David* when in his prosperity said, *he should never be moved*; but he soon saw his error, when God hid his face, and he was troubled, *Pf.* 30. 6. When our affairs prosper, and into our hands God bringeth plentifully, we must wait upon God as our great landlord, and own our obligations to him; must beg his blessing on what we have, and his favour with it, and depend upon him both for the continuance, and for the comfort of it. We must wait upon God for wisdom and grace, to use what we have in the world for the ends for which we are intrusted with it, as those that must give account, and know not how soon. And how much soever we have of this world, and how richly soever it is given us to enjoy it, still we must wait upon God for better things, not only than the world gives, but than he himself gives in this world. Lord, put me not off with this for a portion.—And when the world frowns upon us, and things go very cross, we must not so fret or frighten ourselves, as thereby to be driven

driven off from waiting on God, but rather let us thereby be driven to it. Afflictions are sent for this end, to bring us to the throne of grace, to teach us to pray, and to make the word of God's grace precious to us. In the day of our sorrow we must wait upon God for those comforts which are sufficient to balance our griefs. *Job*, when in tears, fell down and worshipped God, taking away, as well as giving. In the day of our fear we must wait upon God for those encouragements that are sufficient to silence our fears. *Jehoshaphat* in his distress waited on God, and it was not in vain, his heart was established by it; and so was *David's* often, which brought him to this resolution, which was an anchor to his soul, *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.*

4.) Both in the days of youth, and in the days of old age, we must be found waiting on God. Those that are young cannot begin their attendance on God too soon. The child *Samuel* ministered to the Lord, and the scripture story puts a particular mark of honour upon it. Christ was wonderfully pleased with the hosannas of the children that waited on him, when he rode in triumph into *Jerusalem*. When *Solomon* in his youth, upon his accession to the throne, waited upon God for wisdom, it is said *the saying pleased the Lord*. I remember thee (saith God to *Israel*) even the kindness of thy youth, when thou wentest after me, and didst wait upon me in a wilderness, *Jer. 2. 2.* To wait upon God is to be mindful of our Creator, and the proper time for that is in the days of our youth, *Eccl. 12. 1.* Those that would wait upon God aright, must learn to do it betimes; the most accomplished courtiers are those that are bred at court.—And may the old servants of Jesus be dismissed from waiting on him! No, their attendance is still required, and shall be still accepted. They shall

shall not be *cast off* by their master in the time of *old age*, and therefore let not them desert his service. When thro' the infirmities of age they can no longer be working servants in God's family, yet they may be waiting servants. Those that like *Barzillai* are unfit for the entertainments of the courts of earthly princes, yet may relish the pleasures of God's courts as well as ever. The Levites when they were past the age of fifty, and were discharged from the toilsome part of their ministration, yet still must wait on God, must be quietly waiting to give honour to him, and to receive comfort from him. Those that have so done the will of God, that their work is at an end, have need of patience to enable them to wait till they inherit the promise: And the nearer the happiness is which they are waiting for, the dearer should the God be they are waiting on, and hope shortly to be with eternally.

P A R T II.

As we must wait on God *every day*, so we are now to observe,

2. We must wait on him *all the day: toto die*, so we read it. Every day from morning to night we must continue waiting on God. Whatever change there may be of our employment, this must be the constant disposition of our souls, we must attend upon God, and have our eyes ever towards him; we must not at any time allow ourselves to wander from God, or to attend on any thing beside him, but what we attend on for him; in subordination to his will, and in subserviency to his glory.

1.) We must cast our daily cares upon him. Every day brings with it its fresh cares, more or less; these wake with us every morning, and we
need

need not go so far forward as to-morrow to fetch in care; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. You that are great dealers in the world, have your cares attending you all the day; tho' you keep them to yourselves, yet they sit down with you, and rise up with you; they go out and come in with you, and are more a load upon you than those you converse with are aware of. Some, thro' the weakness of their spirits, can scarce determine any thing but with fear and trembling. Let this *burtben* be *cast upon the Lord*, believing that his Providence extends itself to all your affairs, to all events concerning you, and to all the circumstances of them, even the most minute and seemingly accidental; that your times are in his hand, and all your ways at his dispose. Believe his promise, that all things shall be made to work for good to those that love him, and then refer it to him in every thing, to do with you and yours as seemeth good in his eyes, and rest satisfied in having done so, and resolve to be easy. Bring your cares to God by prayer in the morning, spread them before him, and then make it to appear all the day, by the composedness and chearfulness of your spirits, that you left them with him, as *Hannah* did, who, when she had prayed, went her way and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad, 1 *Sam.* i. 18. Commit your way to the Lord, and then submit to his disposal of it, tho' it may cross your expectations; and bear up yourselves upon the assurances God has given you, that he will care for you as the tender father for the child.

2.) We must manage our daily business for him, with an eye to his providence, putting us into the employment wherein we are; and to his precept, making diligence in it our duty; with an eye to his blessing, as that which is necessary to make it comfortable and successful; and to his glory, as

our highest end in all. This sanctifies our common actions to God, and sweetens them, and makes them pleasant to ourselves. If *Gaius* brings his friends that he is parting with a little way on their journey; it is but a piece of common civility, but let him do it *after a godly sort*; let him therein pay respect to them, because they belong to Christ, and for his sake; let him do it that he may have an opportunity of so much more profitable communication with them, and then it becomes an act of christian piety. It is a general rule by which we must govern ourselves in the business of every day, *Whatever we do in word or deed, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*, Col. 3. 17. and thus in and by the Mediator we wait on our God. This is particularly recommended to servants, tho' their employments are but mean, and they are under the command of their masters according to the flesh, yet let them do their servile works *as the servants of Christ*, as unto the Lord, and not unto men: let them do it with singleness of heart *as unto Christ*, and they shall be accepted of him, and from him shall receive the reward of the inheritance, *Eph. 6. 5. 8. Col. 3. 22. 24.* Let them wait on God all the day, when they are doing their day's work, by doing it faithfully and conscientiously, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, by aiming at his glory even in common business. They work that they may get bread, they would get bread that they may live, they would live not that they may live to themselves, and please themselves, but that they may live to God, and please him. They work that they may fill up time, and fill up a place in the world, and because that God who made and maintains us, has appointed us *with quietness to work and mind our own business.*

3.) We

3.) We must receive our daily comforts from him; we must wait on him as our benefactor, as the eyes of all wait upon him, to give them their food in due season, and what he giveth them, that they gather. To him we must look as to our father for our daily bread, and from him we are appointed to ask it, yea, tho' we have it in the house, and upon the table. We must wait upon him for a covenant right to it, for leave to make use of it, for a blessing upon it, for nourishment by it, and for comfort in it. It is in the word and prayer that we wait on God, and keep up communion with him, and by these every creature of God is sanctified to us, 1 *Tim.* 4. 4, 5. and the property of it is altered: to the pure, all things are pure; they have them from the covenant, and not from common providence, which makes a little that the righteous man has, better than the riches of many wicked, and much more valuable and comfortable.

No inducement can be more powerful to make us see to it, that what we have we get it honestly, and use it soberly, and give God his due out of it, than this consideration, that we have our All from the hand of God, and are intrusted with it as stewards, and consequently are accountable. If we have this thought as a golden thread running thro' all the comforts of every day, These are God's gifts, every bit we eat, and every drop we drink is his mercy, every breath we draw, and every step we take, his mercy; this will keep us continually waiting upon him, as the ass on his master's crib, and will put a double sweetness into all our enjoyments. God will have his mercies taken fresh from his compassions, which for this reason are said to be new every morning; and therefore it is not once a week that we are to wait upon him, as people go to market to buy provisions for the whole

whole week, but we must wait on him every day, and all the day, as those that live from hand to mouth, and yet live very easy.

4.) We must resist our daily temptations, and do our daily duties in the strength of his grace. Every day brings its temptations with it; our Master knew that when he taught us, as duly as we pray for our daily bread, to pray that we might not be led into temptation. There is no business we engage in, no enjoyment we partake of, but it has its snares attending it; Satan by it assaults us, and endeavours to draw us into sin: Now sin is the great evil we should be continually upon our guard against, as *Nehemiah* was, *chap. 6. 13. That I should be afraid, and do so, and sin.* And we have no way to secure ourselves but by waiting on God all the day. We must not only in the morning put ourselves under the protection of his grace, but we must all day keep ourselves under the shelter of it; must not only go forth, but go on in dependance upon that grace which he hath said shall be sufficient for us; that care which will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able. Our waiting upon God will furnish us with the best arguments to make use of in resisting temptations, and with strength according to the day. Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and then we wait on the Lord all the day. — We have duty to do, many an opportunity of speaking good words, and doing good works, and we must see and own that we are not sufficient of ourselves for any thing that is good, not so much as to think a good thought; we must therefore wait upon God, must seek to him, and depend upon him, for that light and fire, that wisdom and zeal, which is necessary to the due discharge of our duty; that by his grace we may not only be fortified against every evil word and work, but

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furnished for every good word and work. From the fulness that is in Jesus Christ, we must by faith be continually drawing *grace for grace*; grace for all gracious exercises; grace to help in every time of need: We must wait on this grace, must follow the conduct of it, comply with the operations of it, and must be turned to it as wax to the seal.

5.) We must bear our daily afflictions with submission to his will. We are bid to expect trouble in the flesh. Something or other happens every day that grieves us; something in our relations, something in our callings, events concerning ourselves, our families or friends, that are matter of sorrow. Perhaps we have every day some bodily pain or sickness; or, some cross and disappointment in our affairs; now in these we must wait upon God. Christ requires it of all his disciples, that they *take up their cross daily*, Mat. 16. 24. We must not wilfully pluck the cross down upon us, but must take it up when God lays it in our way, and not go a step out of the way of duty, either to meet it, or to miss it. It is not enough to bear the cross, but we must take it up, we must accommodate ourselves to it, and acquiesce in the will of God in it. We must see every affliction allotted us by our Heavenly Father, and in it must eye his correcting hand, and therefore must wait on him to know the cause wherefore he contends with us, what the fault is for which we are in this affliction chastened; what is the distemper which by this affliction is to be cured, that we may answer God's end in afflicting us, and so may be made *partakers of his holiness*. We must attend the motions of Providence, keep our eye upon our Father when he frowns, that we may discover what his mind is, and what the obedience is we are to learn, by the things that we suffer.—We must wait on God for support under our burdens; must
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put ourselves into, and stay ourselves upon the everlasting arms which are laid under the children of God to sustain them, when the rod of God is upon them. And on him we must attend for deliverance; must not seek to extricate ourselves by any sinful indirect methods, nor look to creatures for relief, but still wait on the Lord until that he have mercy on us; well content to bear the burden till God ease us of it, and ease us in mercy. If the affliction be lengthened out, yet we must wait upon the Lord, even when he hides his face, *Isa.* 8. 17. hoping it is but in a little wrath, and for a small moment, *Isa.* 54. 7, 8.

6.) We must expect the tidings and events of every day, with a chearful and entire resignation to the divine Providence. While we are in this world we are still expecting; hoping well, fearing ill. *We know not what a day, or a night, or an hour will bring forth,* *Prov.* 27. 1. but it is big with something, and we are too apt to spend our thoughts in vain about things future, which happen quite differently from what we imagined. Now in all our prospects we must wait upon God. —Are we in hopes of good tidings, let us wait on God as the giver of the good we hope for, and be ready to take it from his hand; and to meet him with suitable affections when he is coming towards us in a way of mercy. Whatever good we hope for, it is God alone, and his wisdom, power and goodness, that we must hope in. And therefore our hopes must be humble and modest, and regulated by his will. What God has promised us, we may with assurance promise ourselves, and no more. If thus we wait on God in our hopes, should the hope be deferred, it would not *make the heart sick*; no nor if it should be disappointed, for the God we wait on, will over-rule all for the best: but when the desire comes, in prosecution of

which we have thus waited on God, we may see it coming from his love, and it will be *a tree of life*, Prov. 13. 12.—Are we in fear of evil tidings, of melancholy events, and a sad issue of the depending affair? Let us wait on God to be delivered from all our fears, from the things themselves we are afraid of, and from the amazing tormenting fears of them. When *Jacob* was with good reason afraid of his brother *Esau*, he waited on God, brought his fears to him, wrestled with him, and prevailed for deliverance! *What time I am afraid*, saith *David*, *I will trust in thee*, and wait on thee; and that shall establish the heart, shall fix it, so as to set it above the fear of evil tidings.—Are we in suspense between hope and fear? sometimes one prevails; and sometimes the other; let us wait on God, as the God *to whom belong the issues of life and death*, good and evil, from whom our judgment, and every man's, doth proceed, and compose ourselves into a quiet expectation of the event, whatever it may be, with a resolution to accommodate ourselves to it: Hope the best, and get ready for the worst, and then take what God sends.

A P P L I C A T I O N.

First, Let me further urge upon you this duty of waiting upon God all the day, in some more particular instances, according to what you have to do all the day, in the ordinary business of it. We are weak and forgetful, and need to be put in mind of our duty in general, upon every occasion for the doing of it; and therefore I chuse to be thus particular, that I may be your remembrancer.

1. When you meet with your families in the morning, wait upon God for a blessing upon them, and attend him with your thanksgivings for the mercies you and yours have jointly received from
God

God the night past. You and your houses must serve the Lord, must wait on him. See it owing to his Goodness, who is the founder and father of the families of the righteous, that you are together, that the voice of rejoicing and salvation is in your tabernacles, and therefore wait upon him to continue you together, to make you comforts to one another, to enable you to do the duty of every relation, and to lengthen out the days of your tranquillity. In all the conversation we have with our families, the provision we make for them, and the orders we give concerning them, we must wait upon God, as the *God of all the families of Israel*, and have an eye to Christ, as he in whom all the families of the earth are blessed. Every member of the family sharing in family mercies, must wait on God for grace to contribute to family-duties. Whatever disagreeableness there may be in any family relation, instead of having the spirit either burthened with it, or provoked by it, let it be an inducement to wait on God, who is able either to redress the grievance, or to balance it, and give grace to bear it.

2. When you are pursuing the education of your children, or the young ones under your charge, wait upon God for his grace to make the means of their education successful. When you are yourselves giving them instruction in things pertaining either to life or godliness, their general or particular calling, when you are sending them to school in a morning, or ordering them the business of the day, wait upon God to give them an understanding, and a good capacity for their business; especially their main business, *For it is God that giveth wisdom*. If they are but slow, and do not come on as you could wish, yet wait on God to bring them forward, and to give them his grace in his own time; and while you are patiently waiting

on him, that will encourage you to take pains with them, and will likewise make you patient and gentle towards them.—And let children and young people wait on God in all their daily endeavours, to fit themselves for the service of God and their generation. You desire to be comforts to your relations, to be good for something in this world, do you not? Beg of God then a wise and an understanding heart, as *Solomon* did, and wait upon him all the day for it, that you may be still increasing in wisdom, as you do in stature, and in favour with God and man.

3. When you go to your shops, or apply yourselves to the business of your particular calling, wait upon God for his presence with you. Your business calls for your constant attendance every day, and all the day; keep the shop, and thy shop will keep thee; but let your attendance on God in your callings be as constant as your attendance on your callings. Eye God's providence in all the occurrences of them. Open shop with this thought, "I am now in the way of my duty, and I depend upon God to bless me in it." When you are waiting for customers, wait on God to find you something to do in that calling to which he hath called you. Those you call chance customers, you should rather call Providence customers, and should say of the advantage you make by them, *The Lord my God brought it to me*. When you are buying and selling, see God's eye upon you, to observe whether you are honest and just in your dealings, and do no wrong to those you deal with: And let your eye then be up to him, for that discretion to which God doth instruct not only the husbandman, but the tradesman, *Isa.* 28. 26. that prudence which directs the way, and with which it is promised the *good man* shall order his affairs; for that *blessing which makes rich, and adds no sorrow*

sorrow with it; for that honest profit which may be expected in the way of honest diligence. Whatever your employments be, in country-business, city-business, or sea-business, or only in the business of the house, go about them in the fear of God, depending upon him to make them comfortable and successful, and to prosper the work of your hands unto you. Hereby you will arm yourselves against the many temptations you are compassed about with in your worldly business. By waiting on God, you will be freed from that care and cumber which attends much serving; will have your minds raised above the little things of sense and time; will be serving God when you are most busy in your callings, and will have God in your hearts when your hands are full of the world.

4. When you take a book into your hands, God's book, or any other useful good book, wait upon God for his grace to enable you to make a good use of it. Some of you spend much time every day in reading, and I hope none of you let a day pass without reading some portions of scripture, either alone or with your families: take heed that the time you thus spend be not lost time. It is so, if you read that which is idle, vain and unprofitable; it is so, if you read that which is good, even the word of God itself, and do not mind it, or aim to make it of any advantage to you. Wait upon God, who gives you those helps for your souls, to make them helpful indeed to you. The eunuch did so, when he was reading the book of the prophet *Isaiab* in his chariot, and God presently sent him one who made him understand what he read.—You read perhaps, now and then, the histories of former times; in acquainting yourselves with them, you must have an eye to God, and to that wise and gracious Providence which

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governed the world before we were born, and preserved the church in it, and therefore may be still depended upon to do all for the best, for he is *Israel's King of old*.

5. When you sit down to your tables, wait on God; see his hand spreading and preparing a table before you in spite of your enemies, and in the society of your friends. Often review the grant which God made to our first father *Adam*, and in him to us, of the products of the earth, *Gen. 1. 29. Behold I have given you every herb bearing seed, bread-corn especially; to you it shall be for meat*: And the grant he afterwards made to *Noah* our second father, and in him to us, *Gen. 9. 3. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you, even as the green herb*. See in these what a bountiful Benefactor he is to mankind, and wait upon him accordingly. We must *eat and drink to the glory of God*, and then we wait on him in eating and drinking. We must receive nourishment for our bodies, that they may be fitted to serve our souls in the service of God, to his honour in this world. We must taste covenant-love in common mercies, and enjoy the Creator while we are using the creature. We must depend upon the word of blessing from the mouth of God, to make our food nourishing to us. If our provisions be mean and scanty, we must make up the want of them by faith in the promise of God, and rejoice in him, as the God of our salvation, tho' the fig-tree doth not blossom, and there be no fruit in the vine.

6. When you visit your friends, or receive their visits, wait upon God. Let your eye be to him with thankfulness for your friends and acquaintance, whom you have comfort in; that the wilderness is not made your habitation, and the solitary and desert land your dwelling. That you have comfort not only in your own houses, but in
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those of your neighbours, with whom you have freedom of converse; and that you are not *driven out from among men*, and made a burden and a terror to all about you. That you have clothing not only for necessity but for ornament, to go abroad in, is a mercy which, that we may not pride ourselves in, we must take notice of God in; *I decked thee with ornaments*, saith God, *and put earrings in thine ears*, Ezek. 16. 11, 12. That you have houses, furniture, and entertainment, not only for yourselves but for your friends, is a mercy in which God must be acknowledged.—And when we are in company, we must look up to God for wisdom, to carry ourselves so as that we may do much good to, and get no harm by, those with whom we converse. Wait on God for that grace with which our *speech* should be always *seasoned*, by which all corrupt communication may be prevented, and we may abound in that which is good, to the use of edifying, and which may minister grace to the hearers, that our *lips* may *feed many*.

7. When you give alms, or do any act of charity, wait on God. Do it as unto him: give to a disciple in the name of a disciple; to the poor because they belong to Christ. Do it not for the praise of men, but for the glory of God; with a single eye, and an upright heart, and then your alms as well as your prayers, like those of *Cornelius*, will come up for a memorial before God, *Acts* 10. 4. Beg of God to accept what you do for the good of others, that your alms may indeed be *offerings*, *Acts* 24. 17. May be an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God, *Phil.* 4. 18.—Desire of God a blessing upon what you give in charity, that it may be comfortable to those to whom it is given, and that tho' what you are able to give be but a little, like the widow's two mites, yet that by God's blessing it

it may be doubled, and made to go a great way, like the widow's meal in the barrel, and oil in the cruise.—Depend upon God to make up to you what you lay out in good works, and to recompense it abundantly in the resurrection of the just; nay, and you are encouraged to wait upon him, for a return of it even in this life. It is *bread cast upon the waters* which you *shall find again after many days*. And you should carefully observe the providence of God, whether it do not make you rich amends for your good works, according to the promise, that you may understand the loving-kindness of the Lord, and his faithfulness to the word which he hath spoken.

8. When you enquire after publick news, in that wait upon God. Do it with an eye to him, for this reason, because you are truly concerned for the interests of his kingdom in the world, and lay them near your hearts; because you have compassion for mankind, for the lives and souls of men, and especially of God's people. Ask, what news? not as the *Athenians*, only to satisfy a vain curiosity, and to pass away an idle hour or two, but that you may know how to direct your prayers and praises, and how to balance your hopes and fears, and may gain such an understanding of the times as to learn what you and others ought to do.—If the face of publick affairs be bright and pleasing, wait upon God to carry on and perfect his own work; and depend not upon the wisdom or strength of any instruments. If it be dark and discouraging, wait upon God to prevent the fears of his people, and to appear for them when he sees that their strength is gone. In the midst of the greatest successes of the church, and the smiles of second causes, we must not think it needless to wait on God; and in the midst of its greatest discouragements, when its affairs are reduced to the
last

last extremity, we must not think it fruitless; for creatures cannot help without him, but he can help without them.

9. When you are going journies, wait on God. Put yourselves under his protection, commit yourselves to his care, and depend upon him to give his angels a charge concerning you, to bear you up in their arms when you move, and to pitch their tents about you where you rest. See how much you are indebted to the goodness of his Providence for all the comforts and conveniencies you are surrounded with in your travels. It is he that has cast our lot in a land where we wander not in wildernesses, as in the desarts of *Arabia*, but have safe and beaten roads; and that thro' the terrors of war the highways are not unoccupied. To him we owe it that the inferior creatures are serviceable to us, and that our going out and coming in are preserved; that when we are abroad we are not in banishment, but have liberty to come home again; and when we are at home, we are not under confinement, but have liberty to go abroad. We must therefore have our eyes up to God at our setting out, "Lord, go along with me where I go." Under his shelter we must travel, confiding in his care of us, and encouraging ourselves with that in all the dangers we meet with; and in our return must own his goodness; saying, *Lord, who is like unto thee, for he keepeth all our bones, not one of them is broken.*

10. When we retire into solitude, walking in the fields, or reposing ourselves in our closets, still we must be waiting on God; still we must keep up our communion with him, when we are communing with our own hearts. When we are *alone* we must *not* be *alone*, but *the Father* must be *with us*, and we with him. We shall find temptations even in solitude, which we have need to guard

guard against. Satan set upon our Saviour when he was alone in a wilderness. But there also we have opportunity, if we know but how to improve it, for that devout, that divine contemplation, which is the best conversation, so that we may never be less alone than when alone. If when we sit alone and keep silence, withdrawn from business and conversation, we have but the art, I should say the *heart*, to fill up those vacant minutes with pious meditations of God and divine things, we then *gather up the fragments* of time which remain, *that nothing may be lost*, and so are we found waiting on God all the day.

Secondly, Let me use some motives to persuade you thus to live a life of communion with God, by waiting on him all the day.

1. Consider, the eye of God is always upon you. His eyes always behold, and his eye-lids try the children of men. He sees all the motions of our hearts, and sees with pleasure their motions towards him; which should engage us to set him always before us. The servant, tho' he be careless at other times, yet when he is under his master's eye, will wait in his place, and keep close to his business. We need no more to engage us to diligence, than to do our work *with eye-service*, while our master looks on, and because he doth so, for then we shall never look off.

2. Consider how much and how great business you have with God. *Heb. 4. 13.* All things, even the thoughts and intents of the heart, are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do; *πρὸς ὃν ἡμεῖς ὁ λόγος*, *with whom we have business*, or *word*: who hath something to say to us, and to whom we have something to say; or, as some read it, *To whom, for us*, there is *an account*: there is a reckoning, a running account between us and him, and we must every one of us
shortly

shortly give account of ourselves to him, and of every thing done in the body, and therefore are concerned to wait on him, that all may be made even daily between us and him, in the blood of Christ, which ballanceth the account. Did we consider how much we have to do with God every day, we should be more diligent and constant in our attendance on him.

3. The God we are to wait upon, continually waits to be gracious to us. He is always doing us good, prevents us with the blessings of his goodness, daily loads us with his benefits, and slips no opportunity of shewing his care of us when we are in danger; his bounty to us when we are in want; and his tenderness for us when we are in sorrow. His good Providence waits on us all the day, to preserve our going out and our coming in, to give us relief and succour in due season. Nay, his grace waits on us all the day, to help us in every time of need; to be strength to us according as the day is, and all the occurrences of it. Is God thus forward to do us good, and shall we be backward and remiss in doing him service?

4. If we attend upon God, his holy angels shall have a charge to attend upon us. They are all appointed to be *ministering spirits*, to minister for the good of them that shall be heirs of salvation; and more good offices they do us every day than we are aware of. What an honour, what a privilege is it, to be waited on by holy angels, to be borne up in their arms, to be surrounded by their tents! what a security is the ministration of those good spirits against the malice of evil spirits! This honour have all they that wait on God all the day.

5. This life of communion with God, and constant attendance upon him is a heaven upon earth. It is doing the work of heaven, and the will of God,

God, as they do it that are in heaven; whose business it is always to behold the face of our Father. It is an earnest of the blessedness of heaven, it is a preparative for it, and a prelude to it; it is having our conversation in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour. Looking for him as our Saviour, we look to him as our director; and by this we make it to appear, that our hearts are there, which will give us good ground to expect that we shall be there shortly.

Thirdly, Let me close all with some directions, that you may thus wait on God all the day.

1. See much of God in every creature. Of his wisdom and power in the making and placing of it, and of his goodness in its serviceableness to us. Look about you, and see what a variety of wonders, what an abundance of comforts, you are surrounded with; and let them all lead you to him, who is the fountain of being, and the giver of all good. *All our springs are in him*, and from him are all our streams. This will engage us to wait on him, since every creature is that to us, that he makes it to be. Thus the same things which draw a carnal heart from God, will lead a gracious soul to him; and since all his works praise him, his saints will from thence take continual occasion to bless him. It is said of the pious *Jeros* of old, whatever delight they took in any creature, they gave God the glory of it; *e. g.* when they smelled a flower, they said, "Blessed be he that made this flower sweet;" if they eat a morsel of bread, "Blessed be he that appointed bread to strengthen man's heart." If thus we *taste* in every thing *that the Lord is gracious*, we shall thereby be engaged constantly to depend on him, as the child hangs on the mother's breast.

2. See every creature to be nothing without God. The more we discern of the vanity and emptiness

of the world, and all our enjoyments in it, and their utter insufficiency to make us happy, the closer we shall cleave to God, and the more intimately we shall converse with him, that we may find that satisfaction in the father of spirits, which we have in vain sought for in the things of sense. What folly is it to make our court to the creatures, and to dance attendance at their door, whence we are sure to be sent away empty, when we have the Creator himself to go to, who is rich in mercy to all that call upon him; who is full, and free, and faithful? What can we expect from lying vanities? Why then should we observe them, and neglect our own mercies? Why should we trust to broken reeds, when we have a rock of ages to be the foundation of our hopes? And why should we draw from broken cisterns, when we have the God of all consolation to be the foundation of our joys?

3. Live by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot with any confidence wait upon God, but in and thro' a Mediator, for it is by his Son that God speaks to us, and hears from us. All that passeth between a just God and poor sinners, must pass thro' the hands of that blessed *days-man*, who has laid his hand upon them both. Every prayer passeth from us to God, and every mercy from God to us, by that hand. It is *in the face of the Anointed*, that God looks upon us; and *in the face of Jesus Christ*, that we behold the glory and grace of God shining. It is by Christ that we have access to God, and success with him in prayer, and therefore must make mention of his righteousness, even of his only. In our habitual attendance all the day upon God, we must have an habitual dependence on *Him*, who always appears in the presence of God for us; always gives attendance to be ready to introduce us.

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4. Be frequent and serious in pious ejaculations. In waiting upon God we must often speak to him; must take all occasions to do it. When we have not opportunity for a solemn address, he will accept of a sudden address, if it come from an honest heart. In these *David* waited on God all day, as appears by *v. 1.* Unto thee, O Lord, do *I lift up* my soul; to thee do I *dart it*, and all its gracious breathings after thee. We should in a holy ejaculation ask pardon for this sin, strength against this corruption, victory over this temptation, &c. and it shall not be in vain. This is to *pray always*, and *without ceasing*. It is not the length or language of the prayer that God looks at, but the sincerity of the heart in it; and that shall be accepted, tho' the prayer be very short, and the *groanings* such as *cannot be uttered*.

5. Look upon every day, as those who know not but it may be your last day. At such an hour as we think not, the Son of Man comes; and therefore we cannot any morning be sure, that we shall live till night. We hear of many that have been snatched away very suddenly: *What manner of persons therefore ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness.* Tho' we cannot say, we ought to live as if we were sure this day *would* be our last, yet certainly we ought to live as those who do not know but it *may* be so; and the rather, because we know the day of the Lord will come first or last; and therefore we are concerned to wait on him. On whom should poor dying creatures wait, but on a living God?

Death will bring us all to God, to be judged by him. It will bring all the saints to the vision and fruition of him. And surely one to whom we are hastening, and with whom we hope to be for ever, we are concerned to wait upon, and to cultivate an acquaintance with. Did we think
more

more of death, we should converse more with God: Our dying daily is a good reason for our worshipping daily: And wherever we are, we are concerned to keep near to God, because we know not where death will meet us. This will alter the property of death. *Enoch*, that *walked with God*, was translated that he *should not see death*. And this will furnish us with that which will stand us in stead on the other side death and the grave. If we continue waiting on God every day, and all the day long, we shall grow more experienced, and consequently more expert in the great mystery of communion with God, and thus our last days will become our best days, our last works our best works, and our last comforts our sweetest comforts: In consideration of which take the prophet's advice, *Hos* 12. 6. *Turn thou to thy God; keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually.*

S E R M O N VII.

Directions for closing the Day with God.

P S A L M IV. 8.

*I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep:
for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in
safety.*

THIS may be understood either figuratively,
of the repose of the soul in the assurances of
God's grace; or literally, of the repose of the
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body under the protection of his providence. I love to give scripture its full latitude, and therefore take in both.

1. The Psalmist having given the preference to God's favour above any good, here expresth his great complacency in the choice he had made. While he saw many making themselves perpetually uneasy with that fruitless enquiry, *Who will shew us any good?* wearying themselves for very vanity, he had made himself perfectly easy, by casting himself upon the divine good will, *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.* Any good, short of God's favour, will not serve our turn; but that is enough without the world's smiles. If God lift up the light of his countenance upon us, as it fills us with a holy joy, *puts gladness into the heart more than they have whose corn and wine increaseth*, v. 7. so it fixeth us in a holy rest, I will now *lay me down and sleep*. God is my God, and I am pleased, I am satisfied, I desire no more, *I dwell in safety*; or in confidence. While I walk in the light of the Lord, as I want no good, nor am sensible of any deficiency, so I fear no evil, nor am apprehensive of any danger. The Lord God is to me both *a sun and a shield*.

Hence learn, "That those who have the assurances of God's favour towards them, may enjoy and should labour after a holy serenity, and security of mind." We have both these put together in that precious promise, *Isaiah 32. 17. But the work of righteousness shall be peace*; there is a present satisfaction in doing good; and in the issue, *the effect of righteousness shall be quietness and assurance for ever*; quietness in the enjoyment of good, and assurance in a freedom from evil.

A holy serenity is one blessed fruit of God's favour. While we are under God's displeasure, or in doubt concerning his favour, how can we
have

have any enjoyment of ourselves? Hath God a controversy with thee? Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eye-lids, till thou hast got the controversy taken up. *Go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend, thy best friend, Prov. 6. 34.* and when thou hast made thy peace with him, *Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, Eccl. 9. 7.* Let this still every storm, and create a calm in thy soul.

A holy security is another blessed fruit of God's favour. *Thou, Lord, makest me to dwell in safety:* when the light of thy countenance shines upon me I am safe, and I know I am so, and am therefore easy, for *with thy favour wilt thou compass me as with a shield, Psal. 5. 12.*

Nothing is more dangerous than security in a sinful way, and mens crying *peace, peace,* to themselves, while they continue under the reigning power of a vain and carnal mind. O that the sinners that are at ease were made to tremble! Nothing is more foolish than a security built upon the world, and its promises, for they are all vanity and a lie; but nothing more reasonable in itself, or more advantageous to us, than for good people to build with assurance upon the promises of a good God; for those that keep in the way of duty, to be quiet from the fear of evil; as those that know no evil shall befall them, no real evil, no evil but what shall be made to work for their good. This security even the heathen looked upon every honest virtuous man to be entitled to, who is

Integer vitæ, scelerisque purus.

And they thought if the world should fall in pieces about him, he needed not fear being lost in the desolations of it,

*Et si fractus illabatur orbis,
Impavidum ferient ruinæ.*

Much more reason have christians, that hold fast their integrity, to lay claim to it; for *who is he, or what is it that shall harm us, if we be followers of that or of him that is good?*

It is the privilege of good people, that they may be thus easy and satisfied. This holy serenity and security of mind is allowed them; nay, it is promised them; *God will speak peace to his people and to his saints.* And it is the duty of good people to labour after it, and to use the means appointed for the obtaining it. Give not way to the disquieting suggestions of satan, and to those tormenting doubts and fears that arise in your own souls. Study to be quiet, chide yourselves for your distrusts, charge yourselves to believe, and to *hope in God, that you shall yet praise him. Light is sown for the righteous,* and what is sown shall come up again at last in a harvest of joy.

2. The Psalmist having done his day's work, and having given good advice to those to whom he had wished a good night,—to *commune with their own hearts upon their beds,* and to *offer the evening sacrifices of righteousness,* v. 4. 5. now retires to his chamber with this word, *I will lay me down in peace and sleep,* &c.

That which I chose this text for will lead me to consider it literally, of *taking rest in sleep.* And so we have here *David's* pious thought when he was going to bed. As when he awakes he is still with God, he is still so when he goes to sleep, and concludes the day as he opened it, with meditations on God, and sweet communion with him.

It should seem *David* penned this psalm when he was distressed and persecuted by his enemies; perhaps on the same occasion as the foregoing psalm, when he fled from *Absalom* his son. *Without were fightings,* and then no wonder that *within were fears;* yet then he puts such a confidence in God's protection, that he will go to rest at his usual time,

time, and, with his usual quietness and chearfulness, will compose himself as at other times. He knows his enemies have no power against him, but what is given them from above; and none but what is still under the divine restraint; nor shall their power be permitted to exert itself so far as to do him any real mischief; and therefore he retires into the *secret place of the most High*, and *abides under the shadow of the Almighty*, and is very quiet in his own mind. That will break a worldly man's heart, which will not break a godly man's sleep. Let them do their worst, saith *David*, *I will lay me down and sleep*; the will of the Lord be done. Observe here,

1.) His confidence in God; *Thou, Lord, makest me to dwell in safety*: not only makest me safe, but makest me to know that I am so; makest me to dwell with a good assurance. It is the same word that is used *Prov.* 10. 9. concerning him that walks uprightly, that he walks *surely*; he goes on boldly in his way; so *David* here goes boldly to his bed. He doth not *dwell carelessly* as the men of *Laisb*, *Judg.* 18. 7. but *dwells at ease* in God, as the sons of *Zion* in the city of their solemnities, when their eyes see it a quiet habitation, *Isaiah* 33. 20.

There is one word in this part of the text that is very observable: thou, Lord, *only* dost secure me, *q. d.* "even when I am alone, have none of my privy-counsellors about me to advise me, none of my life-guards to fight for me, yet I am under no apprehension of danger while God is with me." The son of *David* comforted himself with this, that when all his disciples forsook him, and left him alone, yet he was *not alone, for the Father was with him*. Some weak people are afraid of being alone, especially in the dark; but a firm belief of God's presence with us in all places, and that divine protection which all good people are under,

would ſilence thoſe fears, and make us aſhamed of them. *Thou only* makeſt me to dwell ſafely : It is done *by thee alone*. God in protecting his people needs not any aſſiſtance, tho' he ſometimes makes uſe of inſtruments : *The earth helped the woman*, yet he needs not ſuch help ; and when all other refuges fail, his own arm works ſalvation. *So the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no ſtrange god with him*, Deut. 32. 12. But that is not all : “ I depend on thee only to do it ; therefore I am eaſy, and think myſelf ſafe, not becauſe I have hoſts on my ſide, but purely becauſe I have the Lord of Hoſts on my ſide.”—The words may look either backward or forward, or rather both : “ Thou *haſt made* me to dwell in ſafety all day, ſo that the ſun has not ſmitten me by day ;” and then it is the language of his thankfulneſs for the mercies he had received : or, “ thou *wilt make* me to dwell in ſafety all night, that the moon ſhall not ſmite me by night ;” and then it is the language of his dependence upon God for further mercies. Both theſe ſhould go together ; and our eye muſt be to God as ever the ſame, who has delivered, and doth, and will yet deliver.

2.) His compoſedneſs in himſelf inferred from hence : *I will both lay me down and ſleep. Simul, or pariter in pace cubabo.* “ They that have their corn and wine encreaſing, that have abundance of the wealth and pleaſure of this world, they lay them down and ſleep contentedly, as *Boaz* at the end of the heap of corn, *Ruth* 3. 7. But tho' I have not what they have, I can lay me down in peace, and ſleep as well as they. I will not only lay me down, as one that deſires to be compoſed, but will ſleep as one that really is ſo.” Some make it to intimate his falling aſleep preſently after he had laid him down : So well wearied was he with the work of the day,
and

and so free from any of those disquieting thoughts which would keep him from sleeping.

Now these are words put into our mouths, with which to compose ourselves when we retire at night to our repose; and we should take care so to manage ourselves all day, especially when it draws towards night, as that we may not be unfitted, and put out of frame for our evening devotions; that our hearts may not be overcharged either on the one hand with surfeiting and drunkenness, as theirs often are that are men of pleasure; or on the other hand with the cares of this life, as theirs often are that are men of business: But that we may have such a command both of our thoughts. and of our time, as that we may finish our daily work well; which will be an earnest of our finishing our life's work well; and all is well indeed that ends everlastingly well.

Doct. As we must begin the day with God, and wait upon him all the day, so we must endeavour to close it with him.

This duty I know not how better to open to you, than by going over the particulars in the text in their order; and recommending to you *David's* example.

I. Let us retire to *lay us down*. Nature calls for rest as well as food. *Man goeth forth to his work and labour, only until evening*, and then it is time to lie down. We read of *Isbbosheth*, that he lay on his bed *at noon*, but death met him there, 2 *Sam.* 4. 5, 6. and of *David* himself, that he came off from his bed at evening-tide, but sin, a worse thing than death, met him there, 2 *Sam.* 1. 2. We must *work the works of him that sent us while it is day*; it will be time enough to lie down when *the night cometh*, and *no man can work*. It is then

proper and ſeaſonable to lie down. It is promiſed, *Zeph. 2. 7. They ſhall lie down in the evening.* We muſt reſt in the time appointed for reſt; and not turn day into night, and night into day, as many do upon ſome ill account or other: for inſtance,

Some ſit up to do miſchief to their neighbours; to kill, and ſteal, and to deſtroy. *In the dark they dig thro' houſes* which they had marked for themſelves in the day-time, *Job. 24. 16. They that do evil hate the light.* Judas the traitor was in queſt of his maſter, with his band of men, when he ſhould have been in his bed. It is an aggravation of the wickedneſs of the wicked, when their hearts are ſo much ſet upon it, that they *ſleep not except they have done miſchief.* Say then, while others ſit up watching for an opportunity to be miſchievous, I will lay me down and be quiet, and do nobody any harm.

Others ſit up in purſuit of the world and the wealth of it. They not only *riſe up early*, but they *ſit up late*, in the eager proſecution of their covetous practices, *Pſ. 127. 2.* and either to get or ſave, deny themſelves their moſt neceſſary ſleep. This their way is their folly, for hereby they deprive themſelves of the comfortable enjoyment of what they have, which is the end, under pretence of care and pains to obtain more, which is but the means. *Solomon* ſpeaks of thoſe that neither day nor night ſee ſleep with their eyes, *Eccl. 8. 16.* that make themſelves perfect ſlaves and drudges to the world, than which there is not a more cruel taſk-maſter: And thus they make that which of itſelf is vanity, to be to them vexation of ſpirit, for they *weary themſelves for very vanity*, *Hab. 2. 13.* and are ſo miſerably in love with their chain, that they deny themſelves not only the ſpiritual reſt God has provided for them as the God of grace, but the natural reſt which he has provided as the God
of

of nature; and it is a specimen of the wrong sinners do to their own bodies, as well as their own souls. Let us see the folly of it, and never labour thus *for the meat that perisheth*, and for that abundance of the rich which *will not suffer him to sleep*; but let us labour for that meat which endureth to eternal life; that grace which is the earnest of glory, the abundance of which will make our sleep sweet to us.

Others sit up in the indulgence of their pleasures. They will not lay them down in due time, because they cannot find in their hearts to leave their vain sports and pastimes, their musick, and dancing, and plays, their cards and dice; or, which is worse, their rioting and excess; for *they that are drunk are drunk in the night*. It is bad enough when these gratifications of a base lust, or at least of a vain mind, are suffered to devour the whole evening, and then to engross the whole soul, as they are apt enough to do insensibly; so that there is neither time nor heart for the evening devotions, either in the closet, or in the family: But it is much worse when they are suffered to go far into the night too, for then of course they trespass upon the ensuing morning, and steal away the time that should then also be bestowed upon the exercises of religion. Those that can of choice, and with so much pleasure, sit up till I know not what time of night, to make, as they say, a merry night of it, to spend their time in filthiness, and foolish talking and jesting, which are not convenient, would think themselves hardly dealt with, if they should be kept one half hour past their sleeping time, engaged in any good duties; and would have called blessed *Paul* himself a long-winded preacher, and have censured him as very indiscreet, when, upon a particular occasion, he continued his speech till midnight, *Acts* 20. 7. And how loth
would

would they be with *David*, at *midnight*, to *rise and give thanks to God*; or with their master, to *continue all night in prayer to God*? Let the corrupt affections, which run out thus and transgress, be mortified, and not gratified. Those that have allowed themselves in such irregularities, if they have allowed themselves an impartial reflection, cannot but have found the inconvenience of them, and that they have been a prejudice to the prosperity of the soul, and should therefore deny themselves for their own good. One rule for the closing of the day well is to keep good hours: every thing is beautiful in its season*.

We shall now take it for granted, that unless some necessary business, or some work of mercy, or some more than ordinary act of devotion keep you up beyond your usual time; you are disposed to lay you down. And let us lie down with thankfulness to God; with thoughts of dying; with penitent reflections upon the sins of the day; and with humble supplications for the mercies of the night.

1. Let us lie down with thankfulness to God. When we retire to our bed-chambers or closets, we should lift up our hearts to God, the God of our mercies, and make him the God of our praises. Whenever we go to bed, I am sure we do not want matter for praise, if we did not want a heart. Let us therefore address ourselves then to that pleasant duty, that work which is its own wages. The evening sacrifice was to be a sacrifice of praise.

* I have heard it said long since, and I beg leave to repeat it now, that

*Early to bed, and early to rise,
Is the way to be healthy, and wealthy, and wise.*

(1.) We

(1.) We have reason to be thankful for the many mercies of the day past, which we ought particularly to review, and to say, *Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with his benefits.* Observe the constant series of mercies, which has not been interrupted, or broken in upon any day. Observe the particular instances of mercy with which some days have been signalized and made remarkable. It is he that has granted us life and favour; it is his visitation that preserves our spirits. Think how many are the calamities we are every day preserved from; the calamities which we are sensibly exposed to, and have been in imminent danger of, and those of which we have not been apprehensive; many of which we have deserved, and which others, better than we are, groan under. *All our bones,* have reason to say, *Lord, who is like unto thee?* For it is God that *keepeth all our bones, not one of them is broken:* It is of his mercies that we are not consumed.—Think how many are the comforts we are every day surrounded with, for all which we are indebted to the bounty of the divine Providence. Every bit we eat, and every drop we drink, is mercy; every step we take, and every breath we draw, is mercy. All the satisfaction we have in the agreeableness and affections of our relations, and in the society and serviceableness of our friends: All the success we have in our callings and employments, and the pleasure we take in them: All the joy which *Zebulun* has in his going out, and *Issachar* in his tents, is what we have reason to acknowledge with thankfulness to God's praise.—Tho' the day has not past without something or other that has afflicted and disappointed us, yet that must not indispose us for praise; however it be, yet *God is good;* and it is our duty in *every thing* to give thanks, and to bless the name of the Lord when he takes
away,

away, as well as when he gives; for our afflictions are but few, and a thousand times deserved; our mercies are many, and a thousand times forfeited.

(2.) We have reason to be thankful for the shadows of the evening, which call us to retire and lie down. The same wisdom, power and goodness that makes the morning, makes the evening also to rejoice; and gives us cause to be thankful for the drawing of the curtains of the night about us in favour to our repose, as well as for the opening of the eye-lids of the morning upon us in favour to our business. When God divided between the light and the darkness, and allotted to both of them their time successively, he saw that *it was good*. Let us therefore give thanks to that God who *forms the light, and creates the darkness*; and believe, that in the revolutions of time, as well as of the events of time, the darkness may be as needful for us in its season, as the light. If the hireling longs till the shadow comes, let him be thankful for it when it doth come, that the burden and heat of the day is not perpetual.

(3.) We have reason to be thankful for a quiet habitation to lie down in: that we are not driven out from among men as *Nebuchadnezzar* was, to lie down with the beasts of the field; that tho' we were born like the wild asses colt, yet we have not with the wild ass the *wilderness for our habitation*, and the desolate and barren land for our dwelling. That we are not put to *wander in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth*, as many of God's dear saints and servants have been forced to do, of whom the world was not worthy: But the good shepherd makes us to lie down in green pastures. That we have not, as *Jacob*, the cold ground for our bed, and a stone for our pillow, (which yet one would be content with, and covet, if with it one could have his dream)
but

but that we have convenient houses to dwell in and comfortable beds to rest upon.

(4.) We have reason to be thankful that we are not forced to sit up: that our master not only gives us leave to lie down, but orders that nothing shall prevent it. Many go to bed, but cannot lie down there, by reason of painful and languishing sicknesses, of such a nature, that if they lie down they cannot breathe: Our bodies are of the same mould, and it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not so afflicted. Many are kept up by sickness in their families; children are ill, and they must attend them. If God *takes sickness away* from the midst of us, and keeps it away, so that *no plague comes near our dwellings*, especially if a numerous family be all well, it is a mercy we are bound to be very thankful for, and to value in proportion to the greatness of the affliction where sickness prevails. Many are kept up by the fear of enemies, of soldiers, of thieves: The *good man of the house watcheth, that his house may not be broken through*; but our lying down is not prevented or disturbed by the alarms of war; we *are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of our repose*; there therefore should we *rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord, even his righteous acts towards the inhabitants of his villages in Israel*, which under his protection are as safe as walled cities with gates and bars, *Judg. 5. 11.* When we lie down, let us thank God that we may lie down.

2. Let us lie down with thoughts of death, and of that great change which at death we must pass under. The conclusion of every day should put us in mind of the conclusion of all our days; when our *night cometh*, our long night which will put a period to our work, and bring the honest labourer both to take his rest, and receive his penny. It is good for us to think frequently of dying; to think of it as oft as we go to bed. It will help
to

to mortify the corruptions of our own hearts; which are our daily burthens; to arm us against the temptations of the world, which are our daily snares; it will wean us from our daily comforts, and make us easy under our daily crosses and fatigues. It is good for us to think *familiarly* of dying; to think of it as our *going to bed*, that thus we may get above the fear of it.—There is a resemblance between the one and the other in the following views.

(1.) At death we shall *retire*, as we do at bedtime: We shall go to be private for a while, 'till the publick appearance at the great day. *Man lieth down, and riseth not till the heavens be no more; till then they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep*, Job 14. 12. Now we go abroad to see and be seen, and to no higher purpose do some spend their day of life; but when death comes, there is an end of both. We shall then see no more in this world; *shall behold man no more*, Isa. 38. 11. We shall then be seen no more. *The eye of him that hath seen me, shall see me no more*, Job 7. 8. We shall be *hid in the grave*, and *cut off from all living*. To die is to bid good night to all our friends, to put a period to our conversation with them. We bid them farewell, but blessed be God, it is not an eternal farewell. We hope to meet them again in the morning of the resurrection, to part no more.

(2.) At death we shall *put off the body*, as we put off our clothes when we lie down. The soul is the man, the body is but the clothes; at death we shall be *unclothed*, the earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved; the garment of the body shall be laid aside. Death strips us, and sends us naked out of the world, as we came into it; strips the soul of all the disguises wherein it appeared, before men, that it may appear naked and open before God. When we are weary and hot, our clothes are a burthen, and we are not easy till we are undressed. Thus *we that are in this tabernacle do groan,*
being

being burthened: But when death frees the soul from the load and encumbrance of the body, which hinders its repose in its spiritual satisfactions, how easy will it be? Let us then think of putting off the body at death with as much pleasure as we do of putting off our clothes at night; and comfort ourselves with this thought, that tho' we are unclothed at death, if we be clothed with Christ and his grace, *we shall not be found naked*, but be clothed upon with immortality. We have new clothes a making, which shall be ready to put on next morning; a glorious body like Christ's, instead of a vile body like the beasts.

(3.) At death we shall lie down in the grave, as on our bed. To those that die in sin, and impenitent, the grave is a dungeon; their iniquities which are *upon their bones*, and which lie down with them *in the dust*; make it so; *Job. 20. 11.* but to those that die in Christ, that die in faith, it is a bed of rest, where there is no *tossing to and fro until the dawning of the day*, as sometimes there is upon the easiest beds we have in this world. There is no danger of being scared with dreams, and terrified with visions of the night; there is no being chastened with pain on that bed, or the multitude of the bones with strong pain. It is the privilege of those who, while they live, *walk in their uprightness*, that when they die they *enter into peace, and rest in their beds*, *Isa. 57. 2.* Holy *Job* comforts himself with this, in the midst of his agonies, that he shall shortly make his bed in the darkness, and be easy there. It is a bed of roses, a bed of spices to all believers, ever since he lay in it who is the rose of *Sharon*, and the lilly of the vallies.

Say then of thy grave, as thou dost of thy bed at night, *There the weary are at rest*; with this further consolation, that thou shalt not only rest there, but rise thence shortly, abundantly refreshed; shalt be called up to meet the beloved of thy soul, and to
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be for ever with him : shalt rise to a day which will not renew thy cares, as every day on earth doth, but secure to thee unmix'd and everlasting joys. How comfortably may we lie down at night, if such thoughts as these lie down with us ; and how comfortably may we lie down at death, if we have accustomed ourselves to them.

3. Let us lie down with penitent reflections upon the sins of the day past. Praising God and delighting ourselves in him is such pleasant work, and so much the work of angels, that methinks it is a pity we should have any thing else to do ; but the truth is, by our own folly we make other work for ourselves, that is not so pleasant, but absolutely needful, and that is repentance. While we are at night solacing ourselves in God's goodness, yet we must intermix therewith the afflicting of ourselves for our own badness. Both must have their place in us, and they will very well agree together.

(1.) We must be convinced of it, that we are still contracting guilt. We carry corrupt natures about with us, which are bitter roots that bear gall and wormwood, and all we say or do is embittered by them. In many things we all offend, inasmuch that there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not. We are in the midst of a defiling world, and cannot keep ourselves perfectly unspotted from it. If we say we have no sin, or that we have past a day and have not sinned, we deceive ourselves ; for if we know the truth by ourselves, we shall see cause to cry, *Who can understand his errors ? Cleanse us from our secret faults ;* faults which we ourselves are not aware of. We ought to aim at a sinless perfection, with as strict a watchfulness as if we could attain it : But after all we must acknowledge that we come short of it ; that we have not yet attained, neither are already perfect. We find it by constant

stant sad experience, for it is certain we do enough every day to bring us upon our knees at night.

(2.) We must examine our consciences, that we may find out our particular transgressions the day past. Let us every night search and try our ways, our thoughts, words, and actions; compare them with the rule of the word, look our faces in that glass, that we may see our spots, and may be particular in the acknowledgment of them. It will be good for us to ask, "What have we done this day? What have we done amiss? What duty have we neglected; What false step have we taken? How have we carried it in our callings, in our converse? Have we done the duties of our particular relations, and accommodated ourselves to the will of God in every event of Providence?" By doing this frequently, we shall grow in our acquaintance with ourselves, than which nothing will contribute more to our soul's prosperity.

(3.) We must renew our repentance, for whatever we find has been amiss in us, or has been said or done amiss by us. We must be sorry for it, and sadly lament it; take shame to ourselves, and give glory to God by making confession. If any thing appear to have been wrong more than ordinary, that must be particularly bewailed; and in general, we must be mortified for our sins of daily infirmity, which we ought not to think slightly of, because they are returning daily, but rather be the more ashamed of them, and of that fountain within which casts out these waters. It is good to be speedy in renewing our repentance, before the heart be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Delays are dangerous: Green wounds may soon be cured, if taken in time, but if they are not, it is our fault and folly, and the cure will be difficult. Tho' through the weakness of the flesh we fall into sin daily, if we get up again by renewed repentance at night, we are not, nor ought we to

think ourselves *utterly cast down*. The sin that humbles us, shall not ruin us.

(4.) We must make a fresh application of the blood of Christ to our souls for the remission of our sins, and the gracious acceptance of our repentance. We must not think that we have need of Christ only at our first conversion to God; no, we have daily need of him, as our *Advocate with the Father*, and therefore as such he always appears in the presence of God for us, and attends continually to this very thing. Even our sins of daily infirmity would be our ruin, if he had not made satisfaction for them, and did not still make intercession for us. *He that is washed*, still needeth to *wash his feet*, from the filth he contracts in every step; and blessed be God, there is a *fountain opened* for us to wash in, and it is always open.

(5.) We must apply ourselves to the throne of grace for peace and pardon. Those that repent must *pray*, that the thought of their heart may be forgiven them, *Acts* 8. 22. And it is good to be particular in our prayers for the pardon of sin. However, the publican's prayer in general, is a very proper one for each of us to lie down with, *God be merciful to me a sinner*.

4. Let us lie down with humble supplications for the mercies of the night. Prayer is as necessary in the evening, as it was in the morning, for we have the same need of the divine favour and care, to make *the out-goings of the evening to rejoice*, that we had to beautify those of the morning.

(1.) We must pray, that our outward man may be under the care of God's holy angels; who are the ministers of his providence. God hath promised, that he will *give his angels charge* concerning those who make the Most High their refuge, and that they shall pitch their tents round about them and deliver them; and what he hath promised, we may and must pray for. Not as if God needed the

service of the angels, or as if he did himself quit all the care of his people, and turn it over to them: But it appears, by abundance of scripture proofs, that they are employed about the people of God, whom he takes under his special protection, tho' they are not seen, both for the honour of God by whom they are charged, and for the honour of the saints with whom they are charged. It was the glory of *Solomon's* bed, that threescore valiant men were about it, of the valiant of *Israel*, all holding swords, because of fear in the night, *Cant.* 3. 7, 8. But much more honourably and comfortably are all true believers attended, for tho' they lie never so meanly, they have hosts of angels surrounding their beds, and by the ministration of good spirits are preserved from malignant spirits. But God will for this *be inquired of by the house of Israel*. Christ himself must *pray the Father*, and he will send to his relief legions of angels, *Mat.* 26. 53. Much more reason have we to ask, that it may be given us.

(2.) We must pray, That our inward man may be under the influences of his holy spirit, who is the author and fountain of his grace. As publick ordinances are opportunities in which the Spirit works upon the hearts of men, and therefore when we attend on them, we must pray for the Spirit's operations; so are private retirements, and therefore we must put up the same prayer, when we enter upon them. We find, that *in slumberings upon the bed, God openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction*, *Job* 33. 15, 16. With this *David's* experiences concur: He found that God visited him in the night, and tried him, and so discovered him to himself, *Pf.* 17. 3. And that God gave him counsel, and his reins instructed him in the night-season, and so he discovered himself to him, *Pf.* 16. 7. He found that was a proper season for remembering God, and meditating upon him; and

in order to our due improvement of this proper season for conversing with God in solitude, we need the powerful and benign influences of the blessed spirit, which therefore when we lie down we should earnestly pray for, and humbly put ourselves under, and submit ourselves to. How God's grace may work upon us when we are asleep we know not; the soul will act in a state of separation from the body; and how far it doth act independent on the body, when the bodily senses are all locked up, we cannot say: but are sure, that the spirit of the Lord is not bound. I have heard of a good man, that used to pray at night for good dreams. We have reason to pray, not only that our minds may not be either disturbed or polluted by evil dreams, in which for ought we know evil spirits sometimes have a hand, but may be instructed and quieted by good dreams, which *Plutarch* reckons among the evidences of increase and proficiency in virtue, and on which the good spirit has an influence.

P A R T II.

II. When we lay us down, our care and endeavour must be to *lay us down in peace*. It is promised to *Abraham* that he shall *go to his grave in peace*, Gen. 15. 15. and this promise is sure to all his spiritual seed, for the *end of the upright man is peace*. Now as an earnest of this let us every night lie down in peace. It is threatened to the wicked, that they shall *lie down in sorrow*, Isaiah 50. 11. It is promised to the righteous, that they *shall lie down, and none shall make them afraid*, Job 11. 19. Let us then enter into this rest.

I. Let us lie down in peace with God. Without this there can be no peace at all. *There is no peace saith my God to the wicked*, whom God is at war

war with. A state of sin is a state of enmity against God; they that continue in that state are under the wrath and curse of God, and cannot lie down in peace; what have they to do with peace? Hasten therefore, O sinner, hasten to make thy peace with God in Jesus Christ, by repentance and faith. *Take hold on his strength, that thou mayest make peace with him, and thou shalt make peace, for fury is not in him.* Conditions of peace are offered, consent to them; close with him who is our peace; take Christ upon his own terms, take Christ upon any terms. Defer not to do this; dare not to sleep in that condition, in which thou dardest not die. Escape for thy life, look not behind thee. *Acquaint now thyself with him, now immediately, and be at peace, and thereby this good shall come unto thee,* thou shalt lie down in peace.—Sin is ever and anon making mischief between God and our souls, provoking God against us, alienating us from God; we therefore need to be every night making peace, reconciling ourselves to him and to his holy will, by the agency of his spirit upon us, and begging of him to be reconciled to us, through the intercession of his Son for us; that there may be no distance, no strangeness between us and God; no interposing cloud to hinder his mercies from coming down upon us, or our prayers from coming up unto him. *Being justified by faith,* we have this *peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ;* and then we may not only lie down in peace, but rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Let this be our first care, that God have no quarrel with us, nor we with him.

2. Let us lie down in peace with all men. We are concerned to go to sleep, as well as to die in charity. Those that converse much with the world can scarce pass a day but something or other happens that is provoking; some affront is given them, some injury done them, at least they think

so. When they retire at night and reflect upon it, they are apt to magnify the offence, and while they are musing on it the fire burns, their resentments rise, and they begin to say, *I will do so to him as he has done to me*, Prov. 24. 29. Then is the time of ripening the passion into a rooted malice, and meditating revenge. Then therefore let wisdom and grace be set on work, to extinguish this fire from hell before it get head, then let this root of bitterness be killed and plucked up; and let the mind be disposed to forgive the injury, and to think well of, and wish well to him that did it. If others incline to quarrel with us, yet let us resolve not to quarrel with them. Let us resolve that whatever the affront or injury was, it shall neither disquiet our spirits nor make us to fret, (which *Peninnah* aimed at in provoking *Hannah*, 1 Sam. 1. 6.) nor sour nor embitter our spirits, nor make us peevish and spiteful: but that we still love ourselves, and *love our neighbours as ourselves*, and therefore not by harbouring malice, do any wrong to ourselves or our neighbour. We shall find it much easier in itself, and much more pleasant in the reflection to forgive twenty injuries than to avenge one. It should be our particular care at night to reconcile ourselves to those who have been injurious to us, as is intimated in that charge, *Eph. 4. 26. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath*. If your passion has not cooled before, let it be abated by the cool of the evening, and quite disappear with the setting sun. If you lie down with these unmortified passions boiling in your breasts, your soul is among lions, you lie down in a bed of thorns, in a nest of scorpions. From what follows immediately, v. 27, *neither give place to the devil*, it has been observed "that those who go to bed in malice have the devil for their bedfellow." We cannot lie down at peace with God, unless we
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be at peace with men; nor in faith pray to be forgiven, unless we forgive. Let us therefore study the things that make for peace, for the peace of our own spirits, by living, as much as in us lies, peaceably with all men. Let us be able to say with *David*, *I am for peace, tho' they are for war.*

3. Let us lie down in peace with our own minds; with a sweet composedness of spirit and enjoyment of ourselves. *Return unto thy rest, O my soul*, and be easy; let nothing disturb my soul.—But when may we be said to lie down in peace with ourselves?

1.) If we have, by the Grace of God, in some measure done the work of the day, and filled it up with duty. If we have the *testimony of our consciences*, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God we have this day had our conversation in the world: that we have done some good in our places, something that will turn to a good account. If our hearts do not reproach us with a *diem perdidit*, “alas! I have lost a day!” or with that which is worse, the spending of that time in the service of sin, which should have been spent in the service of God. But if on the contrary we have abode with God, have been in his fear, and waited on him all the day long, we may then lie down in peace, for God saith, Well done, good and faithful servant. The sleep of the labouring man, of the labouring christian, is sweet, very sweet, when he can say, “as I am a day’s journey nearer my end, so I am a day’s work fitter for it.” Nothing will make our bed-chambers pleasant, and our beds easy, like the witness of the Spirit of God with our spirits, that we are going forward for heaven. *Conscience kept void of offence* will be not only a continual feast, but a continual rest.

2.) If we have by faith and patience, and submission to the divine will, reconciled ourselves to all the events of the day, so as to be uneasy at nothing that God has done, we may then lie down in peace at night. Whatever hath fallen out cross to us, it should not fret us, but we should kiss the rod, take up the cross, and say, All is well that God doth. Thus we must in our patience keep possession of our own souls, and not suffer any affliction to dispossess us of them. We have met with disappointments in husbandry perhaps, in trade, or at sea; debtors prove insolvent, or creditors prove severe; but this and the other proceedeth from the Lord: there is a Providence in it. "Every creature is what God makes it to be, and therefore I am dumb, I open not my mouth: That which pleaseth God ought not to displease me."

3.) If we have renewed our repentance for sin, and made a fresh application of the blood of Christ to our souls for the purifying of our consciences, we may then lay us down in peace. Nothing can break in upon our peace but sin. That is it which *troubles the camp*; if that be taken away there shall no evil befall us. The *inhabitant of Zion* shall not complain of *sickness*, for *the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity*, Isaiah 33. 22. The pardon of sin has enough in it to balance all our griefs, and therefore to silence all our complaints. A man sick of the palsy, has reason to be easy, nay and to *be of good cheer*, if Christ saith to him, *thy sins are forgiven thee*, and I am thy salvation.

4.) If we have put ourselves under the divine protection for the ensuing night, we may then lay us down in peace. If by faith and prayer, we have run into the name of the Lord as our strong tower, have fled to take shelter under the
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shadow of his wings, and made the Lord our refuge and our habitation, we may then speak peace to ourselves, for God in his word speaks peace to us. *He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust.*

5.) If we have cast all our cares for the day following upon God, we may then lay us down in peace. Taking thought for the morrow is the great hindrance of our peace in the night. Let us but learn to live without disquieting care, and to refer the issue of all events to that God who may and can do what he will, and will do what is best for those that love and fear him, saying, Father, thy will be done, and then we make ourselves easy. Our Saviour presseth this very much upon his disciples, not to perplex themselves with thoughts what they shall eat, and what they shall drink, and wherewithal they shall be clothed, because their heavenly Father knows that they have need of these things, and will see that they be supplied. Let us therefore ease ourselves of this burden, by casting it on him who careth for us. What need he care and we care too?

III. Having laid ourselves down in peace, we must compose ourselves to sleep. *I will lay me down and sleep.* The love of sleep for sleeping sake is the character of the sluggard; but as sleep is nature's physick for the recruiting of its weary powers, it is to be looked upon as a mercy equal to that of our food, and in its season to be received with thankfulness. And with such thoughts as these we may go to sleep.

1. What poor bodies are these we carry about with us, that call for rest and relief so often, that are so soon tired, even with doing nothing, or next to nothing? It is an honour to man above the beasts, that he is made to go erect. Yet we have little reason to boast of this honour, when

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we observe how little a while we can stand upright, and how soon we are forced to lie down. The powers of the soul, and the senses of the body, are our honour, but it is mortifying to consider, how after a few hours use they are all locked up under a total disability of acting, and it is necessary they should be so. Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, or the strong man in his strength, since they both lie for a fourth part of their time utterly bereft of strength and wisdom, and on a level with the weak and foolish.

2. What a sad thing is it to be under a necessity of losing so much precious time as we do in sleep. That we should lie so many hours in every four and twenty, in no capacity at all of serving God or our neighbour, by doing any work of piety or charity. Those that consider how short our time is, how much work we have to do, and how fast the day of account hastens on, cannot but grudge to spend so much time in sleep, and wish to spend as little as may be in it; cannot but be quickened by it to redeem time when they are awake, and long to be there where there shall be no need of sleep; but they shall be as the angels of God, and never rest day or night from the blessed work of praising God.

3. What a good master do we serve, that allows us time for sleep, and furnisheth us with conveniencies for it, and makes it refreshing and reviving to us! By this it appears, *the Lord is for the body*, and it is a good reason why we should present our bodies to him as living sacrifices, and glorify him with them. Nay, sleep is spoken of as given by promise to the saints, *Psalms 127. 2. So he giveth his beloved sleep.* The godly man hath the enjoyment of that in a quiet resignation to God, which the worldly man labours in vain for, in the eager pursuit of the world. What a difference

ence is there between the sleep of a sinner, that is within a step of hell, and the sleep of a saint that has good hopes, through grace, of his being within a step of heaven. That is the sleep God gives to his beloved.

4. How piteous is the case of those from whose eyes sleep departs, thro' pain of body, or anguish of mind, and to whom wearisome nights are appointed? who, when they lie down, say, When shall we arise? And who are thus made a terror to themselves. It was said that of all the inhuman tortures used by those whom the *French* king employed to force his Protestant subjects to renounce their religion, none prevailed more than keeping them by violence long waking. When we find how earnestly nature craves sleep, and how much it is refreshed by it, we should think with compassion of those, who upon any account want that and other comforts which we enjoy, and pray for them.

5. How ungrateful we have been to the God of our mercies, in suffering sleep, which is so great a support and comfort to us, to be our hindrance in that which is good. As when it hath been the gratification of our sloth and laziness; when it has kept us from our hour of prayer in the morning, and unfitted us for it at night; or when we have slept unseasonably in the worship of God; as *Eutychus*, when *Paul* was preaching; and the disciples, when Christ was in his agony at prayer. How justly might we be deprived of the comfort of sleep, and upbraided with this as the provoking cause of it, *What! could ye not watch with me one hour?* Those that would sleep, and cannot, must think how often they should have kept awake, and would not.

6. We have now one day less to live than we had in the morning: The thread of time is winding

ing off apace, its sands are running down, and as time goes, eternity is hastening on. Our days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle; which passeth and repasseth in an instant: And what do we of the work of time? What forwardness are we in to give up our account? O that we could always go to sleep with death upon our thoughts, how would it quicken us to improve time! It would make our sleep not the less desirable, but it would make our death much the less formidable.

7. To thy glory, O God, I now go to sleep. *Whether we eat or drink, or sleep, (for that is included in whatever we do) we must do it to the glory of God.* Why do I go to sleep now, but that my body may be fit to serve my soul, and able for a while to keep pace with it in the service of God to-morrow? Thus common actions, by being directed towards our great end, are done *after a godly sort*, and abound to our account: And thus the advantages we have by them are sanctified to us. To the pure all things are pure; and *whether we wake or sleep, we live together with Christ.*

8. To thy grace, O God, and to the word of thy grace I now commend myself. It is good to fall asleep, with a fresh surrender of our whole selves, body, soul, and spirit, to God: Now return to God as thy rest, O my soul; for he has dealt bountifully with thee. Thus we should commit the keeping of our souls to him, falling asleep, (as *David* did, *Psalms* 31. 5.) with, *Into thy hands I commit my spirit*; and as *Stephen* did, *Lord Jesus receive my spirit*. Sleep doth not only resemble death, but is sometimes an inlet to it. Many go to sleep and never wake, but sleep the sleep of death; which is a good reason why we should go to sleep with dying thoughts, and put ourselves under the protection of a living God, and then sudden death will be no surprise to us.

9. O that when I awake I may be still with God! That the parenthesis of sleep, tho' long, may not break off the thread of my communion with God, but that as soon as I awake I may resume it! O that when I awake in the night I may have my mind turned to good thoughts! may *remember God upon my bed*, who then is at my right hand, and to whom the darkness and the light are both alike; and that I may sweetly meditate upon him in the night watches; that thus even that time may be redeemed, and improved to the best advantage, which otherwise is in danger not only of being lost in vain thoughts, but mispent in ill ones! O that when I awake in the morning, my first thoughts may be of God, that with them my heart may be seasoned for all day!

10. O that I may enter into a better rest than that which I am now entering upon! The apostle speaks of a rest, which we that have believed do enter into, even in this world, as well as of a rest which in the other world remains for the people of God, *Heb. 4. 3, 9.* Believers rest from sin and the world, they rest in Christ, and in God thro' Christ. They enjoy a satisfaction in the covenant of grace, and their interest in that covenant. They enter into this ark, and there are not only safe but easy. O that I might enjoy this rest while I live, and when I die might enter into something more than rest, even the joy of my Lord, a fullness of joy!

IV. We must do all this in a believing dependence upon God and his power, providence and grace. Therefore I lay me down in peace and compose myself to sleep, because thou, Lord, keepest me, and assurest me that thou dost so. *Thou, Lord, makest me to dwell in safety. David* takes notice of God's compassing his path, and his lying down, as his observer, *Psalms 139. 3.*
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He sees his eye upon him when he is retired into his bed-chamber, and none else sees him; when he is in the dark, and none else can see him. Here he takes notice of him, compassing his lying down as his preserver; and sees his hand about him to protect him from evil, and keep him safe; feels his hand under him to support him, and to make him easy.

1. It is by the power of God's providence that we are kept safe in the night, and on that providence we must depend continually. It is he that preserveth man and beast, that upholds all things by the word of his power. That death, which by sin entered into the world, would soon lay all waste, if God did not shelter his creatures from its arrows, which are continually flying about. We cannot but see ourselves exposed in the night. Our bodies carry about with them the seeds of all diseases. Death is always working in us; a little thing would stop the circulation either of the blood or the breath, and then we are gone, either never awake, or awake under the arrests of death. Men by sin are exposed to one another; many have been murdered, and many burned in their beds. And our greatest danger of all is from the malice of evil spirits that go about seeking to devour.

We are very unable to help ourselves, and our friends unable to help us. We are not aware of the particulars of our danger, nor can we foresee which way it will arise; and therefore know not where, or how to stand upon our guard. When *Saul* was asleep, he lost his spear and his cruise of water, and might as easily have lost his head, as *Sifera* did, when he was asleep, by the hand of a woman. What poor helpless creatures are we, and how easily are we overcome when sleep has overcome us? Our friends are asleep too, and
cannot

cannot help us. An illness may seize us in the night, which if they be called up and come to us, they cannot help us against; the most skilful and tender are physicians of no value. It is therefore God's providence that protects us night after night; his care, his goodness. That was the hedge about *Job*, and his house, and all that he had round about, which Satan himself could not break thro', nor find a gap in, tho' he traversed it round. There is a special protection which God's people are taken under; they are hid in his pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle, under the protection of his promise, *Pf. 27. 5.* He protects their habitations, as he did the tents of *Israel* in the wilderness. He promised to *create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, a pillar of cloud by day, to shelter from heat; and the shining of a flaming fire by night, to shelter from cold, Isa. 4. 5.* Thus he blesteth the habitation of the just, so that no real evil shall befall it, nor shall any plague come nigh their dwelling.

The care of the divine Providence concerning us and our families we are to depend upon, so as to look upon no provision we make for our own safety sufficient, without the blessing of the divine Providence upon it. Except the Lord keepeth the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. Be the house never so well built, the doors and windows never so well barred, the servants never so careful, or watchful, it is all to no purpose, unless he that keeps *Israel*, and neither slumbers nor sleeps, undertake for our safety; and if he be thy protector, *at destruction and famine thou shalt laugh, and shalt know that thy tabernacle is in peace, Job 5. 22, 24.*

2. It is by the power of God's grace that we are enabled to *think ourselves safe*, and on that grace we must continually depend. The fear of danger,
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tho' groundless, is as vexatious as if it were never so just. And therefore to compleat the mercy of being made *to dwell safely*, it is requisite that by the grace of God we be delivered from our *fears*, (Ps. 34. 4.) as well as from the things themselves that we were afraid of; that shadows may not be a terror to us, any more than substantial evils.

If by the grace of God we are enabled to keep conscience void of offence, and still to preserve our integrity; if iniquity be put far away, and no wickedness suffered to dwell in our tabernacles, then shall we lift up our faces without spot, we shall be steadfast, *and shall not need to fear*, Job 11. 14, 15. for fear came in with sin, and goes out with it. If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God, and man too, and are made to dwell securely, for we are sure nothing can hurt us but sin; and whatever doth harm us, sin is the sting of it; and therefore if sin be pardoned and prevented, we need not fear any trouble. If by the grace of God we be enabled to live by faith, that faith which sets God always before us, that faith which applies the promises to ourselves, and puts them in suit at the throne of grace; that faith which purifies the heart, overcomes the world, and quencheth all the fiery darts of the wicked one; that faith which realiseth unseen things, and is the substance and evidence of them: if we be acted and governed by this grace, we are made to dwell safely, and to bid defiance to death itself, and all its harbingers and terrors: *O death, where is thy sting?* This faith will not only silence our fears, but will open our lips in holy triumphs. If God be for us, who can be against us?

Let us lie down in peace, and sleep, not in the strength of a natural resolution against fear, nor merely of rational arguments against it, tho' they

they are of good use, but in a dependance upon the grace of God to work faith in us, and to fulfil in us the work of faith. This is going to sleep like a christian, under the shadow of God's wings. Going to sleep in faith will be to us a good earnest of dying in faith; for the same faith that will carry us cheerfully through the short death of sleep, will carry us through the long sleep of death.

APPLICATION.

1. See how much it is our concern to carry our religion about with us wherever we go, and to have it always at our right hand; for at every turn we have occasion for it, lying down, rising up, going out, coming in; and those are christians indeed, who confine not their religion to the new moons and the sabbaths, but bring the influences of it into all the common actions and occurrences of human life. We must sit down at our tables, and rise from them, lie down in our beds and arise from them, with an eye to God's providence and promise. Thus we must live a life of communion with God, even while our conversation is with the world. In order to this, it is necessary that we have a living principle in our hearts, a principle of grace, which, like a well of living water, may be continually springing up to life eternal, John 4. 14. It is necessary likewise that we have a watchful eye upon our hearts, and keep them with all diligence, that we set a strict guard upon their motions, and have our thoughts more at command than I fear most christians have. See what need we have of the constant supplies of divine grace, and of a union with Christ, that by faith we may partake of the *root and fatness of the good olive* continually.

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2. See what a hidden life the life of good christians is, and how much it lies from under the eye and observation of the world. The most important part of their business lies between God and their own souls, in the frame of their spirits, and the workings of their hearts in their retirements, which no eye sees but his who is all eye. Justly are the faints called God's hidden ones, and his secret is said to be with them, for they have *meat to eat*, and work to do, *which the world knows not of*; and joys and griefs, and cares, which a stranger doth not intermeddle with. Great is the *mystery of serious godliness*. This is a good reason why we should look upon ourselves as incompetent judges one of another, because we know not others hearts, nor are witnesses to their retirements. It is to be feared, there are many whose religion lies all in the outside; they make a *fair shew in the flesh*, and perhaps a great noise; and yet are strangers to this secret communion with God, in which consists so much of the power of godliness. And on the other hand it is to be hoped, there are many who do not distinguish themselves by any thing observable in their profession of religion, but pass thro' the world without being taken notice of, and yet converse much with God in solitude, and walk with him in the even constant tenor of a regular devotion and conversation. *The kingdom of God comes not with observation*. Many merchants thrive by a secret trade, who make no bustle in the world. It is fit therefore that every man's judgment should proceed from the Lord, who knows mens hearts and sees in secret.

3. See what enemies they are to themselves, that continue under the power of a vain and carnal mind, and live without God in the world. Multitudes I fear there are, to whom all that has been said of secret communion with God is accounted

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as a strange thing. They lie down and rise up, go out and come in, in the constant pursuit either of worldly profits, or of sensual pleasures: But God is not in all their thoughts, not in any of them; they live upon him, upon the gifts of his bounty from day to day, but they have no regard to him, never own their dependence on him, nor are in any care to secure his favour. They that live such a mere animal life as this, do not only put a great contempt upon God, but do a great deal of damage to themselves; they stand in their own light, and deprive themselves of the most valuable comforts that can be enjoyed on this side heaven. What peace can they have who are not at peace with God? What satisfaction can they take in their hopes, who build them not upon God the everlasting foundation? Or in their joys, who derive them not from him the fountain of life and living waters? O that at length they would be wise for themselves, and remember their Creator and Benefactor!

4. See what easy pleasant lives the people of God might live, if it were not their own faults. There are those who fear God and work righteousness, and are accepted of the Lord, but go drooping and disconsolate from day to day; are full of cares and fears and complaints, and make themselves always uneasy; and it is because they do not live that life of delight in God, and dependence on him, that they might and should live. God has effectually provided for their dwelling at ease, but they make not use of that provision he has laid up for them. O that all who appear to be conscientious, and are afraid of sin, would appear to be cheerful, and afraid of nothing else: that all who call God father, and are in care to please him, and keep themselves in his love, would learn to cast all their other care upon him, and

commit their way to him as to a Father. He shall chuse our inheritance for us, and knows what is best for us better than we do for ourselves. "Thou shalt answer, Lord, for me." I have often said, and will abide by it, That a holy, heavenly life, spent in the service of God, and in communion with him, is the most pleasant comfortable life any body can live in this world.

5. See in this, what is the best preparation we can make for the changes that may be before us in our present state; and that is, to keep up a constant acquaintance and communion with God, to converse with him daily, and keep up stated times for calling on him, that so when trouble comes, it may find the wheels of prayer agoing. Then may we come to God with a humble boldness and comfort, and hope to speed when we are in affliction, if we have been no strangers to God at other times, but in our peace and prosperity had our eyes ever towards him. Even when we arrive to the greatest degree of holy security and serenity, and lie down most in peace, yet still we must keep up an expectation of trouble in the flesh. Our ease must be grounded not upon any stability in the creature; if it be, we put a cheat upon ourselves, and treasure up so much the greater vexation for ourselves. No, it must be built upon the faithfulness of God, which is unchangeable. Our master has told us, In the world you shall have tribulation, much tribulation; count upon it; it is only *in me that you shall have peace*. But if every day be to us, as it should be, a sabbath of rest in God, and communion with him, nothing can come amiss to us any day, be it never so cross.

6. See in this, What is the best preparation we can make for the unchangeable world that is before us. We know God will bring us to death,
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and it is our great concern to get ready for it. It ought to be the business of every day, to prepare for our last day, and what can we do better for ourselves in the prospect of death, than by frequent retirements for communion with God, to get more loose from that world which at death we must leave, and better acquainted with that world which at death we must remove to. By going to our beds as to our graves, we shall make death familiar to us, and it will become as easy to us to close our eyes in peace and die, as it used to be to close our eyes in peace and sleep. We hope God will bring us to heaven; and by keeping up daily communion with God, we grow more and more meet to partake of that inheritance; and *have our conversation in heaven*. It is certain, all that will go to heaven hereafter, begin their heaven now, and have their hearts there: if we thus enter into a spiritual rest every night, that will be a pledge of our blessed repose in the embraces of divine love, in that world wherein day and night come to an end, and we shall not rest day or night from praising him, who is and will be our eternal rest.

S E R M O N VIII.

The Folly of despising our own Souls *.

PROV. XV. 32.

He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul.

SOLOMON's Proverbs being generally designed to instruct us in our duty to God and man, many of them are particularly intended to dispose us to receive those sacred dictates, and to make way for the rest, by opening the ear to instruction, and bowing the heart to comply with it. If people were but willing and desirous to learn, the teacher's work were half done : But (as saith the proverb of the ancients) " They that will not be counselled cannot be helped." How should those attain to knowledge and grace, who will not be reconciled to the means of attaining them?

In this text *Solomon* gives such an account of those, whom he found he could do no good upon, as makes their folly manifest before all men. Tho'

* Preached to Mr. *Billingley's* Catechumens, May 25, 1713. This discourse, on account of its great prolixity, is considerably abridged.

this princely preacher made it his business still to teach the people knowledge; tho' his sermons were elaborate and well-studied, (for he *gave good heed, and sought out and set in order many proverbs*) tho' his discourses were plain and practical, sententious and methodical; tho' he took pains to *find out acceptable words, and that which was written was upright, even words of truth*; yet there were those that were never the better for such a preacher, and such preaching. Now Solomon gives this short account of them, and then leaves you to judge concerning them: They *refuse instruction*, and in so doing they *despise their own souls*. We, that have the gospel preached among us, and Wisdom herself by it teaching in our streets, may truly say, *behold, a greater than Solomon is here*; and yet, as to multitudes, he stretcheth out his hand in vain; *Israel* is not gathered, his ministers labour in vain among them. And what is the reason?

I. They refuse instruction. So the fool in the text is described as doing. We have the same words, and thus translated, *chap. 13. 18.* Some read it, *He that puts away instruction* far from him, sets himself at a distance from it, not only because he hates it, but because he fears it. He *strips himself of instruction*; that is another signification of the word, (not only *elongare*, but *denudare*) shaking off his education, as a garment he will not be burdened with, makes himself naked, to his shame. The original word has a further signification, (*ulcisci*) He that will be *revenged on* instruction; that takes it for an affront, and studies revenge, if he be told of his faults.

The word for *instruction* the margin reads *correction*; for in our fallen state, when we are all wrong, that which instructs us must correct us; we cannot be taught to do well, but we must be shewed wherein we have done ill. *The rod and*

reproof give wisdom. The corrections of Providence are intended for instruction: *Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest and teacheest.* But many, tho' they cannot help being chastened, yet refuse and reject the instruction designed them by the chastening, and will not learn any of the many good lessons designed to be taught them by the chastening: Instead of that, they strive with their Maker, and *kick against the goads.* They will not comply with the correction, or answer the ends of it. They refuse discipline; they will not be under check and controul, and will no more be admonished.

(1.) They refuse to *hear* instruction; they turn their backs upon the word, and will not come where it is preached, if they can help it. *Wisdom cries,* and they get out of the hearing: *one to his farm, and another to his merchandise.* A little formality of devotion they can dispense with, to save their credit, and keep up their reputation among men, (*Missa non mordet,*) but the close and powerful application of the word, as a discerners of the thoughts and intents of the heart, they cannot bear. They cannot go so far as *Ezekiel's* hearers, to whom his preaching was as a *lovely song*, charming enough, and which, as they heard it, helped to lull them asleep; but it is to them as the sound of a trumpet, the alarm of war; it makes their ears to tingle, and therefore they get as far as they can from it.

(2.) They refuse to *heed* it. Like the deaf adder, (if they should come within hearing of it) they stop their ears, and *will not hearken to the voice of the charmer, charm be never so wisely.* If they cannot keep it from sounding in their ears, they keep it from sinking into their hearts, and, if possible, will keep it from going any further. They do not value instruction, they see no need of it, and therefore do not desire it. The word of
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the Lord is to them a reproach, they are weary of it; *Jer.* 6. 10. yea, tho' it should come from the mouth of Christ himself; witness the lawyer that complained, *Master, in so saying thou reproachest us also*, *Luke* 11. 45.

(3.) They refuse to *comply with it*. They will do as they have a mind, whatever they are told or taught to the contrary: *They have loved strangers*, and whatever you can say to put them out of love with them, *after them they will go*. They hold fast deceit, tho' they are told of the danger of it, and refuse to return, *Jer.* 2. 25.

2. They that refuse instruction, thereby make it to appear that they *despise their own souls*. They evidence that they have very low and mean thoughts of their souls. This is mentioned as a very absurd thing, and what no rational man will own himself guilty of, which yet every wicked man is really chargeable with. He that refuseth instruction, [*μισεί ἑαυτὸν*, so the LXX.] *hates himself*; despiseth himself; for our souls are indeed ourselves.

There is a despising ourselves which is commendable, and our duty; the same with denying ourselves, abasing, abhorring, and humbling ourselves. The *poor in spirit* thus despise themselves: being willing to suffer rather than to sin, *do not count their lives dear*. This gracious self-contempt is a qualification for the greatest honour and advancement. But there is a despising of ourselves and of our own souls which is culpable, and of pernicious consequence; such a piece of folly as is the cause of abundance of other folly, and particularly this of refusing instruction. By giving us divine revelation for the enlightning and directing, the renewing and sanctifying of our souls, God has put the greatest honour imaginable upon them, has distinguished them not only from
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the beasts of the earth, and the fowls of heaven, but from many and mighty nations of the earth. Now if we regard not the dictates of divine revelation, we throw away this honour God has put upon our souls, and declare we do not value it.

The honour of the soul is, that it is rational and immortal. Now they that refuse divine instruction despise their own souls under both these considerations; for the design of that instruction is to cure, direct, and cultivate the rational powers of the soul, to support their authority, and assist their operations. If therefore we have any value for that part of their honour, we will receive that instruction. It is likewise intended to prepare the soul for its future and immortal state, and so to secure to it a blessed immortality: If therefore we have any value for that part of our soul's honour, we shall reckon the instructions of God's word well worthy of all acceptance.

But I shall speak to it more generally, that I may take in more of the many instances of contempt which people put upon their own souls. And being desired to address myself particularly to young people, I know not how I could better serve my design, which is to engage them to be truly religious betimes, than by possessing them with a value for their own souls, and arming them against the folly of despising them. If the soul is the man, (as certainly it is) as there is a holy self-love, so there is a holy self-esteem which is necessary to that due concern which we all ought to have about our souls and eternity.

In prosecution of the subject I shall endeavour,

I. To shew who they are that despise their own souls. And,

II. To prove the absurdity and folly of it.

I. How

I. How do people make it appear that they despise their own souls? Who? Where is he that is guilty of such a gross absurdity?

1. Some despise their own souls in Opinion. They advance notions of the human soul that derogate from the honour of it, and put men upon a level with the beasts that perish; they care not how mean a character they put upon the soul, so they can but place their own souls from under God's government and judgment. The atheists and Sadducees of the age, who believe that there is no substance but matter, and shut all incorporeal nature out of the number of beings, and consequently make their own souls to be only a particular species of matter modified and put in motion, so as to produce sense and perception, and suppose it is that which thinks and apprehends, reflects and deliberates, chuseth and refuseth; that all the performances of philosophy and politicks are the products of matter and motion; and, in short, that man is but a very little above the beasts, whereas the word of God has made him but a little below the angels. The absurdity of these notions is philosophically demonstrated by Dr. Bentley, in his *Confutation of Atheism from the faculties of the Soul*. But it is no wonder men can look within them and say They have no souls, when they are such fools as to look about them and say *There is no God*. Many that would be thought to understand themselves better than their neighbours, that they may get clear of the obligations of reason and conscience, under colour of wit wage war with wisdom; and that they may not be charged with neglecting their salvation, or incurring the damnation of their own souls, chuse rather to despise them, as not capable either of salvation or damnation; and that they may not come under the imputation of acting unreasonably, ridicule

dicule reason, as the *ignis fatuus* of the mind*. Those who speak thus scornfully of that noble rank of beings, and of the faculties and capacities of their own souls, remind me of *Solomon's* words, *Eccl. 10. 3. When he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool.*

Those despise their own souls that deny the *immortality* of them: who, that they may justify themselves in living like beasts, expect no other but to die like beasts. *Ede, bibe, lude, post mortem nulla voluptas*, Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die, and there is an end of us. What a contempt do they put upon this candle of the Lord, who think it is put out by death! whereas it is only taken out of a dark lanthorn and set upon a candlestick, where it extends its light much further. And how ridiculously do the pretenders to free-thinking insinuate that *Solomon* speaks doubtfully of the existence of the soul in a state of separation from the body, *Who knows the spirit of a man that goeth upward?* *Eccl. 3. 21.* Whereas he speaks so very expressly in the same book, *chap. 12. 7.* that *when the dust returns to the earth as it was, the spirit returns to God, who gave it;* and in that other place only speaks as one in the dark concerning the manner of its remove to that separate state. *None knows the way of the spirit,* either into the body, or out of it, *Eccl. 11. 5.*

The sober heathen will rise up in judgment against such men of this generation, and will condemn them; for tho' they had no divine revelation, as we have, to acquaint them how man at first became a living soul; That there is a spirit in man,

* So it is called in a profane poem which I remember to have seen in MSS. long since, (I know not whether it was ever printed) called a *Satyr upon Man.*

and that *the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding*; That death itself cannot *kill the soul*; and, That *it shall be redeemed from the power of the grave*; yet they had admirable notions of the excellent nature of the human soul, and of its immortality: They looked upon it to be a ray of divine light, a spark of divine fire. *Quid aliud voces animam quam Deum in corpore hospitantem*, saith Tully.

2. Many more despise their own souls *in practice*. They do so who abuse them—who hazard them—who neglect them—or who prefer their bodies before them.

1. Those that *abuse* their own souls, may truly be said to despise them. *Solomon* fastens this brand of folly and madness upon those who sin against God, that they *wrong their own souls*, to that degree, that they may be said to be in love with the death and ruin of them, *Prov. 8. 36.* O what base usage do many people give their own souls! as the *ostrich* against her young ones, they are *hardened against them as tho' they were not theirs.*

(1.) Those abuse their own souls who devote them to the service of satan, by doing his lusts, and surrender themselves his vassals to be *led captive by him at his will.*—It is the honour of our souls that they are made to be *the temples of the Holy Ghost*; the living temples of the living God; and what greater honour could be put upon them? How then do those dishonour their own souls that suffer satan, that head of the apostacy and rebellion, to keep his palace as a rival with God, nay, and to keep garrison as an enemy against God, in the soul, and are willing not only that his goods should be in peace and unmolested, but that all the powers of the soul should be employed for him.—It is the honour of our souls that they have a relation to heaven, are in alliance with that upper world; and
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tho' they have by sin very much lost their acquaintance with it, yet they are still thro' grace capable of keeping up a correspondence with it, and stand fair for an inheritance in it. What greater dishonours then can they put upon themselves, than by entering into a league with the devil, who left his first state there, was shamefully thrust out thence, cast down to hell, and is in no hope, as we are, to retrieve the honour from which he is degraded?—It is the honour of our souls that they are made capable of serving God, and so of pleasing, and praising him, and advancing the interests of his kingdom among men. Those souls therefore are basely abused that are subjected to the power of Satan, and are under his conduct. Our Saviour has represented this to us in the parable of the Prodigal Son, who when he had wasted all his portion, (expressing the wretched havock which outrageous sinners make of their knowledge and gifts, the sparks of virtue that were struck into their minds by a good education, and the convictions of their own consciences) then disparaged himself to the last degree, when he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, who sent him into his fields *to feed swine*: representing the slavery, that is, both the ignominy and the drudgery, which sinners submit themselves to, by giving themselves up to the service of satan. What! Is the devil a master good enough for a soul that has God for its maker? Is feeding swine, *i. e. making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof*, work good enough for a soul that is capable of glorifying and enjoying God? Are husks, the food of swine, proper provision for a soul that is capable of being feasted with angels food? What a disparagement is it to a soul to serve its enemies, that tyrannize over it, and seek its ruin, especially since if it had
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had any spark of honour left in it, it might by divine grace easily and certainly not only regain a glorious liberty from them, but gain a more glorious victory over them? O that the sounding of the jubilee trumpet, which proclaims the release of captives, might awaken and animate poor enslaved souls, to think their own liberty from satan's yoke worth struggling for, and to exert themselves accordingly. Let them apply to their own case what God by the prophet saith to the Jews in *Babylon*, Isa. 52. 1. *Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion. Put on thy strength, O soul, put on a holy resolution, in dependance upon divine grace, no longer to be ruled by a base lust, and led captive by satan: throw away the rags of thy slavery, and put on thy beautiful garments; be bold, and appear great; for if thou wilt but take Christ for thy redeemer and ruler, and give up thyself entirely to him, he will undertake that henceforth Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the Law, but under Grace.* Despise not thyself, despise not thy own soul any longer by a sneaking submission to the tyranny of satan, but reach out to, and take not up short of the *glorious liberty of the children of God.*

(2.) Those abuse their own souls that defile them with the pollutions of sin. All sin is defiling to the mind and conscience, brings a blot and stain upon the soul, which renders it odious in the eyes of the Holy God, and nauseous, and uneasy also to itself, whenever it comes to have spiritual senses exercised, renders it unfit to approach to God, and to eat of the holy things, as ceremonial pollutions under the law did. Now what an abuse is it to the soul, whose happiness consists in the enjoyment of God and itself, to be thus made offensive to both; afraid of its God,

and ashamed of itself? What mean thoughts have those of their own souls, that can do them this indignity, this injury, rather than deny themselves the gratification of a base lust! Let us therefore shew that we have really a value for our own souls, by hastening to make use of the water of purification provided for them in the blood of Christ, that the *conscience* being *sprinkled* with that, may be *purged from dead works*, and so restored to the service and enjoyment of the living God, *Heb. 9. 14.*

But *fleshly lusts* are in a particular manner defiling, all the irregular inordinate use of the pleasures and delights of sense; these are said to *war against the soul*; against its purity and peace, and enjoyment of itself. They are a reproach and disparagement to the soul, and therefore we sadly abuse our souls when we think to refresh ourselves by bathing in the filthy streams of sensual pleasures, by which we do but defile ourselves, and, like the *sow, wallow in the mire*. It is the honour of our souls that they are capable of spiritual and heavenly pleasures; of entertaining themselves with divine contemplations and devout affections, the pleasures of which may be brought near to the delights of blessed spirits above, that are already entered into the joy of our Lord. And those maintain the honour of their souls, who by faith and love, by prayer and meditation, keep up their correspondence with heaven. But how do those despise their souls, and this honour put upon them, who not only neglect those heavenly entertainments, but unfit themselves for them, and exclude themselves from them by the guilt they contract every day in the use of the pleasures of sense, and of sin! For the soul to be thrown from its rest in God, where only it can find true rest, to be shut out from its communion with him, to be
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put to confusion in its approaches to him, and made uneasy to itself, is to have great wrong done it, and great contempt put upon it.

(3.) Those abuse their own souls that deceive them with lies and falsehoods. A man justly reckons himself affronted, and resents it accordingly, who is imposed upon with sham and banter; it is a reflection upon his understanding: And yet perhaps he is doing the same thing to his own soul. Taking advantage of its credulity in favour of itself, he not only suffers it to persist in its mistakes, but doth all he can to rivet and confirm them. How many cheats do people put upon their own souls, which will turn at last to their own ruin; for self-flatterers and self-deceivers will prove in the end to have been self-destroyers. How do they make themselves believe the strangest and grossest absurdities, and proceed upon them as if they were undoubted truths! There are none bad, but they are so upon some bad principle, which, if it were true, would bear them out; but it is a strong delusion. The wicked heart is a deceived heart, that turns men aside; and none perish, but it is with a *lie in their right hand*, Isa. 44. 20. It is with *lying vanities* that they are deluded who forsake their own mercies, *Jonah* 2. 8. They that mock God, and think to put a cheat upon him, do but deceive themselves, and put a damning cheat upon their own souls, *Gal.* 6. 7. When the word of God, (which is a discernor of the thoughts) tells us what sinners say *in their hearts*; or, say *to* their hearts, we may infer what slights they put upon their own souls, and how they abuse them. The fool faceth down his conscience with this, That *there is no God*, or if there be, he may go on securely in his wicked way, for *the Lord hath forsaken the earth. He hath forgotten, he hides his face, and will not require it.*

The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard. Did ever any man banter another as sinners banter their own souls? run them down with assurance, and beguile them with fraud and artifice?

When the soul begins to be afraid of the wrath of God, and to think of fleeing from it by repentance, it is abused with this suggestion, that there is no danger. As God is not so strict in his demands, so he is not so severe in his punishments as the scripture makes him to be. God hath indeed said, *There is no peace to the wicked*; but when the sinner comes to apply it to himself, he tells his own soul, *I shall have peace*, tho' I go on to walk in the way of my heart, and to add drunkenness to thirst, *Deut. 29. 19.* He is drawn into an opinion, and lulled asleep with it, that heaven is a fool's paradise, and hell is but a bugbear to frighten children, and therefore it is taught to *mock at fear*, and not *to be affrighted*.—They that flatter themselves with a conceit that the external professions and performances of religion will serve to bear them out, in the judgment of the Great Day, tho' their spirit and conversation be never so disagreeable, give the lye to their own consciences, and thus abuse and despise their own souls. The apostle tells us, That he, who only seems to be religious, and is not so really, *deceives his own heart*, seduceth it, misleads it, and so abuseth it; and, that they who are hearers of the word only, and not doers, do but *deceive themselves*, James 1. 22, 26.

Let us therefore do this justice to our own souls, and put this respect upon them, to *tell them the truth*: Let one faculty deal faithfully with another; for if they act separately, it will be to the ruin of the whole. Let the understanding be true to the conscience, in informing it right concerning truth and falsehood, good and evil; and then

then let the conscience be true to the soul in applying it.

(4.) Those abuse their own souls that distract and disquiet them with inordinate cares and griefs about this world, and the things of it. Who make them work in the mines, and tug at the oar of worldly pursuits, having their hearts burthened and quite overcharged with an anxious solicitude, not only what they shall eat and drink, but what they shall do to get estates and grow great in the world.—It is our duty to *labour, working with our hands the thing that is good*, but it is our sin and folly, if all our days *we eat in sorrows and darknes*, Eccl. 5. 17. always in fear of losing what we have, and always in care to make it more, *to lay house to house and field to field*, with an insatiable and boundless desire. If our souls be put always to the stretch in pursuit of lying vanities, so that we have no rest, or enjoyment of ourselves, we abuse our own souls. It is the honour of our souls that they are made capable of working for the glory of God, and securing eternal life; of *working out our own salvation*; and of doing the will of God as the angels do it that are in heaven. What a disparagement then is it to these souls to make them slaves and drudges to the world, and to keep all their faculties employed in the work of the beasts that perish! Covetous worldlings are said to *load themselves with thick clay*, Hab. 2. 6. such perfect pack-horses do they make of their souls, and so fast do they chain them to this earth, when they should be mounting up with wings like eagles heavenwards.

Let us therefore maintain the dignity of our own souls, by disentangling them from the world, and the cares of it, and managing ourselves with a holy indifferency as to those things, rejoicing

as tho' we rejoiced not, and weeping as tho' we wept not, and letting *our souls dwell at ease*, in an assurance of the wisdom and goodness of the Divine Providence working all for our good at last, and putting it out of the power of any worldly cross or disappointment to disturb us in that repose. This is to treat our souls respectfully, and as they ought to be treated, reserving them for the employments that become them, and that they are fitted for.

(5.) Those abuse their own souls that put them off with a portion of the things of this world. Those know how to value their own souls, that can be content with a little of this world for their passage, because there is better in reserve; but those greatly undervalue them, that could be content with it all for their inheritance and home. It is the honour of the soul, that its original and alliance is heavenly: It stands in relation to the upper world, and therefore it is a debasement to it to let it take up with the things of this world for its felicity, which can neither suit its capacities, nor satisfy its vast desires.

“ If Souls be made of earthly mold,
 “ Let them love gold;
 “ If born on high,
 “ Let them unto their kindred fly:
 “ For they can never be at rest
 “ Till they regain their ancient nest.”

Herbert.

It is the honour of the soul, that it is spiritual, and is capable of spiritual enjoyments, spiritual riches: Those therefore put a slight upon their souls that think the entertainments of sense, which we have in common with the brutes, are sufficient to make them happy, and can call them
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their good things. — It is the honour of the soul that it is immortal in its duration, and has something in its constitution which, if it were not blinded and biaſſed by the world and the fleſh, would aſpire after immortal bleſſedneſs. How do they then diſhonour their own ſouls, who take up a reſt and home for them in thoſe things that will not laſt ſo long as they muſt laſt, that muſt be very ſhortly either buried in our graves, or left to our heirs, and will not ſtand us in any ſtead in the ſoul's ſtate of ſeparation from the body. Thus the ſoul's being muſt eternally ſurvive its bliſs, and therefore muſt of courſe be eternally miſerable. How did that rich man in the parable deſpiſe and abuſe his own ſoul, who when he had his barns enlarged and filled, ſaid to his ſoul, *Soul, thou haſt much goods laid up for many years, it is all thine own, and it is enough, it is thine all, now take thine eaſe, eat, drink, and be merry?* If the man had had the ſoul of a ſwine, it had been ſomething to talk to it at this rate; but what is this to a ſoul that muſt *this night be required?* muſt this night remove it knows not where, and muſt leave all theſe things behind, to it knows not whom? From his folly let us all learn this wiſdom for ourſelves, this juſtice and kindneſs to our own ſouls, to lay up treaſure for them, not in this world, which we are haſtening from, but in the other world, which we are haſtening to.

2. Thoſe deſpiſe their own ſouls that hazard them, and lay them open to danger. What we value we are loth to venture the loſs of: Thoſe that know how to value their ſouls will not endanger their ſoul's lives; yet this multitudes do, without any regret.

(1.) Thoſe hazard their ſouls that expoſe them to the wrath and curſe of God every day by wil-

ful sin, upon presumption that after a while they shall repent of their sin, and it shall be forgiven them, and all shall be well. Those have very light thoughts of their own souls, that can thus venture them in hopes of God's mercy, when at the same time they bid defiance to his justice. It is true, there is a way of escaping his wrath, by repentance and faith in Christ; but these are God's gifts to those that *pray for them*, not to those that presume upon them. It is but a *peradventure*, whether God will give repentance, whether the divine Providence will give space to repent, and whether the divine Grace will give a heart to repent; a tender heart, to those who have thus hardened their hearts by the deceitfulness of sin. Those have certainly little regard to their own souls, that throw them thus into the fire of God's wrath, in hopes of snatching them as brands out of it, when there is such danger of perishing in it.

But, of all sinners, none do more impudently avow and proclaim their contempt of their own souls than those do that curse themselves in their passions or vehement asseverations; that challenge God Almighty to damn them; nay, and sometimes, with a horrid emphasis, to *damn their souls*. As if they thought their damnation lingered and slumbered too long, they imprecate that which the devils themselves deprecated, being *tormented before the time*. Do they know what the damnation of the soul is, who dare thus *run upon the thick bosses of his buckler*, and stretch out their hands against him? Those make nothing of their own souls that make nothing of God's wrath, nor consider what a *fearful thing* it is for a living soul, that hates holiness, to *fall into the hands of the living God*, that hates sin, and will reckon for it,

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(2.) Those hazard their souls who embark them in a false and deceitful bottom, and in that venture them into the vast ocean of eternity. If we build our house upon the sand, when there is a rock provided for us to build it upon, it is a sign we despise our own souls, and think any thing will serve to be a security for them; as it is a sign a man makes small account of his money when he puts it out upon very slender security, and cares not what hands he lodgeth it in. It is a great thing, my brethren, to venture into another world, to be brought to judgment, and to have our everlasting state determined by an irreversible sentence; and it concerns us all seriously to consider what hope we have that we shall come off well in that day, and what ground we have for that hope: Whether it be a hope that will not make us ashamed. You are baptized, you are called Christians, you make a visible profession of religion, a passable, perhaps a plausible one; you have a form of godliness, and perhaps join yourselves with those that are most strict and serious; and this you think will be a good security to you for the favour of God, and the happiness of heaven, tho' you are strangers to the power of godliness, and are under the dominion of the world and the flesh. It is a sign you know not the worth of your souls, when you dare venture them thus upon that which will not bear their weight. Those despise their souls, that can send them to God's bar with no other plea in their hands but that, *we are Abraham's seed*; or that, *We have eaten and drank in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets*; or that, *The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we*; tho' they have no evidence at all for them that they love God, or believe in Christ, or re-

pent of their sins, or that they are sanctified by the grace of God.

Let us shew the esteem we have for our own souls, by building upon a firm foundation, and preparing that for their removal into another world which will stand them in stead, and which they may triumph in. Let us not think it enough, when we die, to say, that we commit our souls into the hands of Almighty God, and to cry, *Lord Jesus receive my spirit*; but let us make it the care and business of our lives to prepare our souls, and get them *made meet* to be committed into the hands of God and Christ, and to be welcomed, that it may not be said to them, *Depart, I know you not*. Let us not run any risque in the concerns of our souls, but press after that assurance which blessed *Paul* had attained when he said, *I know whom I have believed*, whom I have trusted with this precious soul of mine, that great trust which I have lodged in the hands of the great Trustee, and He is able to keep that which I have submitted to his conduct, and then committed to his care, against that day, 2 *Tim.* 1. 12.

(3.) Those hazard their souls who engage them as a pawn for the world, and the gains of it. They are aiming at great things here below; they *will be rich*, for they think they cannot otherwise be happy. This mistake makes way for a thousand more. They are in *haste to be rich*, and are told, that they that are so *cannot be innocent*, Prov. 28. 20. yet they will hazard their innocency, and with it all the comfort and happiness of their souls, rather than not succeed. Here is a bargain to be made, some worldly design to be compassed, which with the help of a lye, a fraud, or a false oath, may bring home a great deal of worldly advantage. They cannot but own that such practices

tices are highly dangerous to their souls; natural conscience at first startles at such things; but it is for the getting a present gain, which they think is certain, and not loseable. The loss of the soul is future, and they are willing to think it either uncertain or retrievable, and therefore they resolve to run the hazard. They flatter themselves with hopes that they may gain the world and save their souls too. However, if they can but gain the world, let the worst come, if they do lose their souls, they shall fare as well as their neighbours; and if they alone must bear it, they will bear it as well as they can. This is making light of the soul indeed, to hazard its eternal bliss for an inconsiderable trifle of this world's wealth, and then to turn it off with a jest, "If I perish, I perish, and there is an end of it." No, there is not an end of it, for it is an everlasting destruction; and those who run this venture will see their folly when it is too late, and will be taught by the loss of their souls to know the worth of them.

How ready are many vain people to pawn their souls for the truth of every idle word they speak: "Upon my soul it is so." Verily these make light of their souls indeed, that will venture them upon any the most trifling occasion. Dost thou know what thou pawnest, man, and what the value of it is? Thou wouldest not be so free of a precious stone, if thou hadst it, as thou art of a precious soul. Those play high, who, whether in jest or earnest, stake their souls, and do not consider what a subtil gamester the devil is; that souls are the prize he aims at; and that it is them he lies in wait to deceive, and so to devour. If we be so foolish as to hazard their ruin, let him alone to make it sure. Let us therefore make it appear we do not despise our own souls, by taking heed to them, and keeping them dili-

diligently, *that the wicked one toucheth them not*; for there is danger, lest if he touch, he take. Let us avoid all occasions of sin, and temptations to it; all appearances of evil, and approaches towards it; and take heed of a bold adventure in any case wherein the soul is concerned, for fear of the worst. In things of value, and that are our all, it is good to be sure, and folly to run a hazard; to hazard a soul for that for which a man would be loth to hazard his life, this is the height of folly.

3. Those despise their own souls that neglect them. They think it is well enough if they do not wilfully destroy their souls, tho' nothing is done towards the salvation of them; whereas starving the child is as surely the murder of it as poisoning it. Those certainly despise their own souls that make no provision for them.

(1.) That take no care to get the wounds of their souls healed. Sin is a wound to the soul; a bleeding killing wound; a wound and dishonour: Jesus Christ has made provision for the cure of this wound. There is *balm in Gilead*, and he himself is the *physician there*; by his stripes we may be healed. But in vain doth the physician do his part in prescribing, if the patient will not do his in observing the prescriptions. Christ *would have healed them*, but they *would not be healed*; and thus the wound, not looked after in time, proves fatal. Those that take no care to get their sins pardoned, their consciences purified, and their corruptions mortified, leave their own souls as the priest and levite did the wounded man, because (like them) they have no value for them; they care not whether they live or die. They feel not the pain of their wounds in conviction of Sin, they fear not the consequences of them in a dread of wrath, and so no application
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is made to Christ; no enquiry what shall I do to get my sins pardoned? and to escape the death they threaten me with? And so the soul is filled with wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores which are are not bound up, *Isai. i. 6.*

It is certain, those *fools* that *make a mock at sin*, and make light of that, are chargeable with this further instance of folly, they make light of their own souls, and are not at all solicitous what becomes of them. By this therefore let us all make it appear that we value the lives of our souls, by enquiring, *Wherewith will the Lord be pleased?* What shall we do to recover his favour? with a readiness to do any thing, to submit to any operation, to go through any course of spiritual physic prescribed, so that we may not die of our wounds.

(2.) Those that take no care to get the wants of their souls supplied, despise them. The soul in its own nature is craving, and has desires which ought to be satisfied; but in its fallen state it is needy, it is miserably poor, it is ready to perish for hunger, as the prodigal in the far country. This world has nothing but *husks* for it: *In our Father's house, and there only, there is bread enough.* Now those have no value for themselves, that put off their souls with these husks, and think not of applying themselves to the Father of spirits for the food of spirits, the bread of life.—The soul wants knowledge; wants to be acquainted with God its maker, with Christ its redeemer, with the employments it is brought up to, with the enjoyments it is designed for; wants to be acquainted with the upper world it is akin to, with the future world it is bound for. The needful knowledge of these things will not be got without care and pains. Now those that will rather let their own souls be destroyed for lack of knowledge, than take that
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care and pains, shew what a small account they make of them. They are in care to furnish themselves with that knowledge which is necessary to their getting a livelihood in this world, but not that which is necessary to their serving, glorifying, and enjoying God; and so in the greatness of their folly wander endlessly. —The soul wants to have communion with God, it is tired with the pursuits of the world, and surfeited with its pleasures, and longs to have fellowship with its own relations, to associate with those of its own kind, to have a correspondence with heaven. There is a way appointed for such an intercourse as this, which would be its life and joy; but holy ordinances, by which it is to be kept up and maintained, are neglected, or not duly attended to. The great things of God's law and gospel are accounted *as strange things*: Prayer, by which the supply of our soul's wants should be fetched in, from the fulness which is in Jesus Christ, is either omitted or sinks into a formality. In all this a contempt is put upon the soul, as if it were not worth making provision for.

(3.) Those that take no care to watch over their own souls, despise them. There ought to be a constant guard upon our spirits, a jealous eye, and a careful hand upon them, that the first risings of corruption in them may be subdued and mortified, and the first risings of any good affections in them cherished and encouraged. *Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently*, Deut. 4. 9. Those that know how to value their souls, will *keep them with all diligence*, as knowing that *out of them are the issues of life*. But how many are there that have precious souls to keep, and never cast an eye upon them, nor make enquiries concerning them, where they are, or what they are doing, or what is likely to become of them; never retire
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into their hearts, or commune with them. There is no care taken to keep out that which is prejudicial to the soul's interests, nor to promote what is necessary, and will be serviceable to them. And for want of circumspection, the soul soon becomes like *the field of the slothful*, which when *the wall was broken down was all grown over with thorns, and nettles covered the face thereof*, Prov. 24. 30, 31. There is the picture of a neglected soul; it is all overgrown with vain and foolish thoughts, corrupt and vile affections. By these God is dishonoured, the soul is disgraced, all good fruit is choaked, and *the earth that brings forth these thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned*. It is sad to think how many precious souls, that stand fair for heaven, are ruined and undone to all eternity, through mere carelessness.

(4.) Those that take no care to get the eternal welfare of their souls secured. They are hastening into a state where they must be for ever, either compleatly happy, or compleatly miserable, and yet never were truly solicitous what they should do to escape that misery, and to lay hold on that happiness. Certainly these despise their own souls; they do not think them worth saving; not worth the jaylor's enquiry, *What must I do to be saved?* Or that young man's, *Good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?* A thousand imperinencies are enquired after, and the great concerns of the soul and eternity not regarded.

This honour God has put upon the soul, that he has not only by its creation made it capable of eternal life, but by its redemption made it a candidate for eternal life: But those despise this honour God has put upon them, who *neglect the great salvation*. As is said of the unbelieving Jews, *Acts 13. 46. they judge themselves unworthy of eternal*

nal life. They have not the wisdom of the unjust steward, who took care for a house to be in when he was turned out of his stewardship. It is to be feared, that even among those that are called christians, read the scriptures, and hear sermons, there are many who never yet put the question seriously to themselves, "What will become of me in the other world? If I should die to night, whither would death bring me?" Or if they have asked the question, they have not pursued it, nor brought it to any issue, but the matter is still at uncertainties; and they are content it should be so, and put off the prosecution of this enquiry, as *Felix* did, to some *more convenient season*; they know not when. When they come to be sick, or come to be old, then they will begin to think of their souls and eternity, and to prepare for another world when they find they must stay no longer in this. What low thoughts do these delays speak of their own souls, as if their welfare were to be the last and farthest thing in their thoughts?—And those that seem to be in earnest in enquiring the way to heaven, yet perhaps do not like it when they are shewed it, but fly off from the bargain when it comes to be struck; as he did that *went away sorrowful* from Christ, *because he had great possessions*. Some value he had for his soul, else he had not gone away sorrowful; but he had a greater value for the world, else he had not gone away at all. Those that have a beloved sin, a *Dalilah*, an *Herodias*, a house of *Rimmon*, which they cannot find in their hearts to part with, no, not to save their souls, shew how little they value them: For those that know the worth of them will be glad to accept of Christ upon his own terms, and upon any terms.

P A R T II.

4. Those despise their own souls, that prefer their bodies before them. Man is a creature admirably composed of matter and spirit, which tho' closely united, have separate interests and capacities. It is the sinfulness and misery of our fallen state, that the body has got dominion over the soul, and the soul is become carnal: *He also is flesh.* It will be the felicity of our glorified state, that the soul will have the dominion, and the body itself will become spiritual. But it is the test now in this state of probation, which of these we will give the preference to, the soul or the body. Now those may truly be said to despise their own souls comparatively, that prefer their bodies before them, and allow them their principal cares.

(1.) Those that employ their souls only to serve their bodies, and make provision for them, do in effect despise their own souls. The body was made to serve the soul, in serving God; and when it is kept so employed, it is a *temple of the Holy Ghost*, and on that account truly honourable: But if, instead of that, the soul be made to serve the body in serving the world, and all its noble powers are kept at constant work to provide for the gratification of the body and its appetites, this is a great contempt put upon the soul. Many people live, as if they had bodies only to take care of, and not souls; or as if the reasonable soul were intended only to forecast for the sensitive one; and man had no other prerogative above the beasts, but that with the use of his reason he is capable to screw up the delights of sense to a greater degree of pleasurable-ness, and make them more nice and delicate; to improve by art the gifts

gifts of nature, which the inferior creatures are content to take as they find them; which, after all, doth but make the desires of sense the more humourfome, and consequently the delights of sense the less pleasing. But what a disparagement is this to a rational soul to be wholly taken up in such sordid employments, and to be made a perfect drudge to the body; as if we had souls given us for no other end but to keep our bodies from putrifying; and the powers of reason served for no other purpose, but to be caterers for the desires of sense! This is that *fore evil* which *Solomon* saw under the sun, the *servant on horseback*, and the *prince attending as a servant* or lacquey to him. *Eccl.* 10. 5, 6, 7. When the wits are set on work to invent satisfactions for the appetites and passions, and the intellectual powers, which should be employed in the noblest speculations, and the most needful conduct of the heart and life, are employed in the meanest projects, here is a soul despised, and making itself truly despicable.

(2) Those that injure their souls to *please* their bodies, comparatively despise their own souls.—Those do so that indulge the ease of the flesh to the soul's loss and detriment; that to spare a little pains to the body, come short of great advantages to the soul, which it might gain to itself either here or hereafter.—Those do so that indulge the appetites of the flesh to the soul's hurt and damage; cannot find in their hearts to deny themselves, and to cross the cravings of the flesh. The sensual appetite is apt to be carried out inordinately towards excesses, and as far as it is gratified, the soul is prejudiced by it, *the heart is overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness*, and rendered unfit for heavenly converse and pursuits.—The *Israelites* in the wilderness coveted *quails*, they could not live without flesh; and God gave them their request; but at the

the same time *he sent leanness into their souls*, Psalm 106. 15. He withdrew his grace from them, and those comforts which used to make their souls as a watered garden. Those do not know how to value their own souls, who can be content to have them starved and made lean, so that their bodies may be feasted, and fed to the full.

There is no sin that doth more immediately prejudice the soul to please the body, than *drunkenness*; for it deprives men, for the time, of the use of their reason, and profanes that crown, that glory of the human nature, by casting it to the ground, and levelling men with the beasts that perish. The understanding of the man is darkened, his memory in a manner lost, his thoughts in a tumult, and his passions have got clear of the government of reason, and are all in an uproar; his speech bewrays him to be a fool. Can a man put a greater contempt than this upon his own soul, thus to trample it in the dirt? And besides the present injury that it doth to reason, it doth a lasting mischief to conscience and religion; it debauches the mind, hardens the heart and stupifies it; it alienates the affections from divine things, and has been the ruin of many that were well educated, and began well. Drunkards, to gratify the spark in the throat, as they call it, extinguish the fire from heaven, the fire of holy love and devotion, and kindle a fire of vile affections there, which if infinite mercy do not prevent, will burn to the lowest hell.

(3.) Those that endanger their souls to *secure* their bodies, despise their own souls. When at any time we are brought to this dilemma, that there is no way of avoiding the sin of the soul, but by suffering in the body, and no way of avoiding suffering in the body, but by the sin of the soul, then it will appear which we give the pre-

ference to, the soul or the body. Those that will deny Christ, rather than die for him, and to escape the fiery furnace, will worship the golden image, plainly shew that they despise their own souls. When the storm of *persecution ariseth because of the word*, they will rather *make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience*, than of the world and of a good estate; and contrary to the common dictates of reason, will rather cast themselves over-board than their wares. Tho' all that a man has he will give for his life, but little of what they have will they give for the life of their souls. Our Lord Jesus has expressly told us, that *he that will save his life by disowning Christ, the same shall lose it*; by saving a transient satisfaction he shall lose an eternal felicity; but whosoever is willing to *lose his life, shall find it with infinite advantage in eternal life*: But they will not take his word, and therefore chuse iniquity rather than affliction, a choice which they will certainly repent: It were well if they would repent in time. Let us shew that we value our souls by making *Moses's choice*, *Heb. 11. 25. Rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season*; and theirs who *loved not their lives to the death* in the cause of Christ; and that of blessed *Paul*, who *counted not his life dear to himself, so that he might finish his course with joy*: Let us reckon our losses for our religion abundantly made up, if we do but secure the salvation of the soul. When that blessed martyr bishop *Hooper* was urged to recant, with this consideration, that life is sweet, and death bitter: "It is true, said he, but eternal life is more sweet, and eternal death more bitter." This was the language of one that put a value upon his own soul; as on the contrary, he that in the like case said, "The fire is hot, and nature is frail, and the truth is, I cannot burn," and therefore denied Christ,

Christ, and turned papist; shewed that he preferred his body before his soul, as multitudes do, who will rue it at the last.

II. I come next briefly to shew the folly of those who thus despise their own souls. And really the thing speaks for itself. Men cannot be guilty of a greater absurdity: Their folly will shortly be made manifest to all men; and to themselves too when all those things, for the sake of which they slighted their own souls, are lost and gone, and the soul that despised itself is for ever abandoned by its Maker to a miserable remembrance of its own folly, *in forsaking its own mercies*, which would have put a crown upon its hopes, for *lying vanities* which put a cheat upon them.—To shew the folly of those that despise their own souls, let us consider only these five things, the nature of the soul, and its nearness to us; the purchase of the soul; the projects that are concerning it; and its perpetual duration.

I. Consider the *nature* of the soul, which is too noble, too excellent to be despised. They that despise it *despise dominions*, and *speake evil of dignities*. They *pursue my soul*, saith Job, chap. 30. 15. The word in the original signifies *my principal one*; for the soul is the principal part of us. Jacob calls it his honour, Gen. 49. 5. David calls it his glory, Ps. 16. 9. It is folly therefore to despise that which has such an innate excellency in it, and has so much honour put upon it. The soul of man is no despicable thing, and therefore they are fools that despise it.—The soul is of divine original. It was not made of the dust, as the body was, but it was the breath of the Almighty; it had the image of God stamped upon it, and is the masterpiece of God's workmanship in this lower world. He that *despiseeth the poor, reproacheth his Maker*, so doth he that despiseth his own soul; he thereby reflects

dishonour upon the Father of spirits, as if that work of his hands which he rejoiced in were not worth our regarding.—The soul is of inestimable value; for its powers are great and noble; its apprehensions not stinted by the horizon of sense and time, but reach far beyond it. It is capable of knowing God, and conversing with him, and of receiving a divine revelation in order thereunto. It is capable of being sanctified by the spirit and grace of God, and employed in praising and blessing God. Nay, it is capable of being glorified with God, of seeing him as he is, and enjoying him to eternity: and is this a thing to be despised?—Self-consciousness is in the nature of the soul. It is capable of reflecting upon itself, and conversing with itself. *Nosce teipsum*, “Know thyself,” was an ancient dictate of wisdom. Self-ignorance is supposed to be a gross absurdity when it is asked, *Know ye not your own selves?* 2 Cor. 13. 5. But those that despise themselves, and are in no concern about their own souls, shew that they have no right knowledge of themselves. This faculty of the soul, which is so much its honour, doth not do its part; *the light that is in them is darkness*.

2. Consider the *nearness* of the soul. It is *his own soul* that the sinner despiseth, that is, it is *himself*: for the soul is the man, and what is the man but a living soul? Abstract the soul as living, and the body is a lump of clay: Abstract the soul as rational, and the man is as the beasts that perish. Persons in scripture are oft reckoned by souls; for the body is but the shell, the soul is the kernel. Now to the right value of a thing, it must be considered not only what it is in itself, but what interest we have in it. The loan of a thing is not so valuable as the property. Now the world is but lent us, whatever we have in it, it is not to be called our own; but our souls are our own; we brought

brought them into this world, and shall carry them out. The soul is called *the darling*, Pf. 35. 17. In the original it is, *my only one*. We are entrusted with but one soul, and therefore the greater is the shame if we neglect it, and the greater the loss if we lose it. Our souls being our only ones, should be our darlings, not our drudges; being near, they should be dear to us, and our constant care and concern should be about them. They are committed to our charge by him whose *all souls are*, to be employed in his service now, and to be fitted for a happiness in the vision and fruition of him hereafter: And of this trust we must shortly give account. "Man, woman, thou hadst a soul of thine own; what didst thou do with it? It was lodged in thy hand, where is it? It was to be thy peculiar care, has it been so?" O what folly is it to despise our souls, when we are so nearly interested in them that we really are good or bad, and it is well or ill with us, according as our souls are, or are not well looked after. The concerns of our souls are as our Saviour speaks, the τὰ ἡμέτερα, the things that are *our own*. The concerns of the world are the τὰ ἀλλότρια, they are *another man's*; Luke 16. 12. *Epietetus* spoke much the same when he made the conduct and government of our appetites and passions, *abstine* and *sustine*, to be the τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῶν the duty which is *ours*, but the issues of our worldly affairs to be the τὰ ἐκ ἐφ' ἡμῶν the event, which is *God's*. The keeping of our hearts is *above all keepings*, and therefore they ought to be kept *with all diligence*, Prov. 4. 22.

3. Consider the *purchase* of the soul, and the price that was paid for its redemption. If we despise the soul, we despise that, which not only the all-wise Creator dignified, but which the all-wise Redeemer too put yet greater honour upon, and so reflect upon his judgment too. We reckon

the value of a thing by that which a wise man will give for it, that knows it, and is under no necessity of purchasing it. Our Lord Jesus knew very well what souls were, and had no need of them, being happy without them, and yet he gave himself, his own precious blood, to be a ransom for them; *Mat. 20. 28. ἀντίλυτρον*, a counter-price. He made his soul an offering for ours, to teach us how to value them. When God would prove the excellency of his people, and his value for them, he says, *I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee, Isa. 43. 3, 4.* What a demonstration is it then of the intrinsic value of souls, as well as of the kindness he had for them when he gave *his own son, the son of his love*, to suffer and die for them?

You see how high souls stand in Christ's account, and shall they then stand low in ours? As silver and gold would not satisfy the desires of a soul, nor its capacities, so neither would they satisfy for the sins of the soul. We are *not redeemed with such corruptible things, but with the blood of Christ*, which is of inestimable value. Shall we then despise that which he paid so dear for, and sell that for *a mess of pottage*, like *profane Esau*, which he purchased with his own blood? And let us further consider, that if Christ paid such a price for the purchase of our souls, he will enquire after them, whether we take any care of them or no; as all wise men do after their purchases. If we carelessly lose our own souls, Christ will be no loser; for if he be not glorified in their everlasting happiness, he will be glorified in their everlasting ruin. If they forget the rock that formed them, and *deny the Lord that bought them*, let them know, that as he that formed them will shew them no favour, so he that bought them will say, *Depart from me, I know you not.*

4. Consider the projects that are laid about souls, and what striving there is for them. God and the world, Christ and satan are rivals for the throne in them: God cannot have a more acceptable present brought him than your souls, (*My son, give me thy heart*;) nor Satan a more acceptable prey. It concerns you then to look about you, and to make such a disposition of your own souls as will be for your true interest: to fortify them against the assaults of their worst enemies, and to furnish them for the service of their best friends.—Think what projects the love of God has to save souls; with what a peculiar care that God, whose the worlds are, has been pleased to concern himself for the world of mankind. He had thoughts of love to a remnant of the sons of men, before the worlds were. He sent his son to seek and save lost souls; and saith himself to the returning soul, *I am thy salvation*. He hath given his Spirit to work upon our spirits, and to witness with them. He has appointed his ministers to *watch for your souls*; their business is to *win souls*: So much is done, so much is doing for the salvation of the souls of men.—Think also what projects the malice of satan has to ruin your souls, and to rule them, in order thereto. What devices, what depths, what wiles he hath in hunting for the precious soul! and how all the forces of the powers of darkness are kept continually in arms to *war against the soul*! The devil's agents trade in *the souls of men*. Rev. 18. 13. Let us not therefore despise our own souls, but have a careful eye upon them, that they may become God's children, and not the devil's slaves.

5. Consider the perpetual duration of souls, and the preparations that are made in the other world to receive them. Did we but live by that faith, which is the *substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*, we should value ourselves

and our own souls at another rate than we commonly do: Things are valued very much by their durableness: Gold is the most valuable metal because most durable. Now this is the great thing which speaks the worth of the soul, and shames those that despise it, that it is an immortal spirit, it is to last and live for ever: It is a flame that can never be extinguished. The spirit of a man is that *candle of the Lord* which will never be blown out, or burnt out; it must survive both the body and the world. O! think of thy soul, as that which will not only live and act when it is separated from the body, but as that which must be somewhere for ever! for ever! And is such a soul as this to be despised?—But this is not all; there is everlasting happiness or everlasting misery designed for souls in the other world, according to their character in this, and according as they are found when they are fetched hence. Were we all sure that our immortal souls would be immortally happy in the other world, they ought not to be despised, but great care taken of them, to prepare them for that happiness. But the matter is not so: we are in danger of falling short of that happiness, and forfeiting our title to it, and of being cast-aways at last, and then we are undone.—Think what preparations of wrath are made to receive sinful souls, and you will see yourselves concerned for your precious souls, that they may be saved from that wrath to come, and will stir them up as the angel did *Lot*, Gen. 19. 17. *Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, stay not in all the plain, escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.* Who will pity thy soul, and snatch it as a brand out of the burning, if thou hast thyself no regard to it?—Think what preparations of glory are made for sanctified souls; such as *eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive.* Souls must

must needs be of great value, when there is so much laid out, so much laid up, to make those souls truly happy whom the King of Kings delights to honour. Look therefore upon the world to come, and then you will see your souls worth taking care of. How lightly soever some people now think of their own souls, I am confident they will be of another mind shortly, when either the grace of God opens their eyes; or, when death hath drawn aside the interposing veil of sense. When the soul is stript, it will see itself to be no such despicable thing as it now looks upon itself to be. It is good for us always to have such thoughts of ourselves, and of other things, as we shall have shortly when we come to ourselves.

A P P L I C A T I O N.

1. Let us see and bewail our folly in having had such low thoughts of our own souls; that we have forgot their dignity, and put dishonour upon them. Evidences of this there are, too many and too plain, while we have thought of our bodies with more concern than was meet; as if we had bodies only to take care of. We are apt to take up with a cheap and easy religion, asking how much will serve just to bring us to heaven, as if we were afraid of doing too much for our own souls, whereas all the danger is of doing too little. We crowd our religion into a corner, and instead of making a business of it, as it requires and deserves, make a by-business of it: We are eager in our worldly pursuits, but very remiss and indifferent in holy duties. This is a sign we have low thoughts of our own souls.—We converse little with our own souls; and do not enquire as we should into their state and temper; nor take care to balance their accounts, but let their affairs lie at large and unsettled.

settled. — We are very prodigal of our time and opportunities, and take no care to improve what we have, or to redeem what we have lost. Those that value their souls, value their time, as knowing that the eternal welfare of their souls depends upon the due improvement of it. What value do those put upon their souls that sleep in summer, and play in harvest, when they should be laying in provision for their souls against winter; those that idle away sabbath-time, and the time of the morning and evening sacrifice every day, when they should be doing some service to their own souls?

Let us be ashamed of our folly in this matter; saying *so foolish have I been and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee*. If Christ had not had more care for our souls than we ourselves have had, we had been in hell long since. The matter is so bad, that it is not capable of aggravation. We ourselves have suffered so much by our neglect, that we are inexcusable if we be not troubled for it, and lay it not to heart. Tho' we have reason to hope that, upon our repentance God has forgiven us, yet we have reason enough not to forgive ourselves.

2. Let us learn for the future how to put a due value upon our own souls: to magnify ourselves above the brutes, so as to scorn in any respect to level ourselves with them; and to magnify our souls above our bodies, so as to be more solicitous about our spiritual and eternal concerns, than about any secular affairs whatsoever, even those of the greatest importance. Let us believe that one soul is more worth than all the world; that this soul of ours is so, and that the gain of all the world, if we could compass it, would not compensate for the loss of it; but the saving of the soul will make us abundant amends for whatever loss we may sustain by it. — Let us value our souls, as they have
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relation to God, whose image they bear, and for whose glory they were made. Let us value them as they have relation to another world, which they were made for, and are hastening to: value them as spiritual, and immortal, that they may employ themselves in spiritual work, and entertain themselves with spiritual delights, and may be still aiming high, at glory, honour and immortality, resolved not to take up short.—Let us not so value ourselves, as to think any good work below us, nor any service we can do to God or our brethren, tho' it be the meanest and most despised; but let us always so value ourselves, as to think any *evil* work below us, and a disparagement to us to do an ill thing, tho' never so much in fashion and reputation. Let us think our souls too good to be made drudges to the world, and captives to the flesh, and slaves to any base lust. A heathen could say, *Major sum & ad majora natus quam ut corpori sum mancipium* *. It is the great soul of man, that great soul of thine, whose cause we are pleading against thyself, who dost despise it: Shall we gain our point, and prevail with you to think more honourably of it?

3. Let us make it to appear that we do indeed value our own souls. You will all say you do. But what proof do you give of it? Shew it me by your works, that you prefer your souls before your bodies, and that you have nothing so much at heart as their true welfare. Let all that converse with you know, by your constant watchfulness over your words and ways, that you have a true respect for your own souls, and would not do any thing to their prejudice.—Be much in communing with your own hearts, in reflecting upon

* I am greater, and born to greater things, than to be a slave to the body.

yourselves, and enquiring what progress you make in the way to heaven, and how you grow in grace, what ground you get of your corruptions, and whether you do not lose ground: Be aware of guilt contracted by your sins of daily infirmity, and renew your repentance daily, and the application of the blood of Christ to your consciences, to cleanse and purify them.—Be afraid of sin, of every thing that looks like it and leads to it. Check the risings of corruption, and look diligently, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble and defile you. To sin is to wrong the soul; and to save that wrong from being its ruin, there is no other way but to repent; that is to afflict the soul, to be pricked to the heart. To sin is to make work for repentance, that is the best that can come of it; so that if we have any value for our own souls, we must shew it by keeping at a distance from sin, and having not only a dread of it, but an antipathy to it.—We must shew that we love our souls by our diligent and constant attendance on the means of grace; by our keeping up secret prayer, and conversing much with the word of God, without which the soul cannot prosper, or be in health. Whatever has a tendency to the good of our souls, and the improving of them in knowledge and grace, and fitness for heaven, we must shew our esteem for our souls by improving them for these purposes.

4. Let us value other things, as they have relation to our souls, and stand affected to them accordingly.—Let us value the Bible as the best book, because it is a book for the soul. It discovers our souls to us as a glass, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart: It discovers to our souls the way that leads to their present and future happiness. In the scriptures we think we have eternal life, life for the soul. It is
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the excellency of the word of God, that it converteth the soul, it enlightens the mind, it rejoiceth the heart, it maketh *wise to salvation*. Let us value the sabbath as the best day of the week, because it is a day for the soul, a day that befriends the soul's employments and enjoyments, when the body rests. All that honour their own souls, will *call the sabbath a delight, holy of the Lord, and honourable*.—Let us value those as our best friends that are friends to our souls, and fear those as our worst enemies that are enemies to our souls: too often we do the contrary. It is certain those that tempt us to sin, that court us to forbidden pleasures, and flatter us in forbidden practices, are enemies to our souls: Yet such as these most people are pleased with as their friends, delight in their company, and willingly hearken to all they say. It is certain those are friends to our souls that reprove us for sin, that faithfully tell us of our faults, warn us of our danger, and call us to our duty: Yet such as these most people are displeased with as their enemies, *because they tell them the truth*. Would we shew that we value our own souls, let us learn to say to a tempter, *Get thee behind me satan*; and to a reprover, *Smite me, and it shall be a kindness*.—Let us reckon that condition of life best for us which is best for our souls; which is most free from temptations, especially to the sin that most easily besets us; and which gives us the greatest advantages for our souls. Our value for our souls should reconcile us to afflictions, which tho' grievous to the body, yet by the grace of God working with them, are beneficial to the soul, and *yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby*.

But above all, let us value our Lord Jesus Christ as the best friend that ever poor souls had, who died to redeem and save them. The good Shepherd is *the shepherd and bishop of our souls*. A

good shepherd indeed, that laid down his life for our souls; that has provided food, and healing and rest, and an eternal happiness for our souls! O let our souls love him, and prize him, and study what we shall render to him for his love.—And what shall we render? All the return he expects is, That since he hath approved himself such a good friend to our souls, we should apply ourselves to him accordingly, and make use of him. Let me therefore now press this upon you with all earnestness. Shew the value you have, both for precious Jesus and for your own precious souls, by trusting him with them; commit them to his care, submit them to his conduct and government; observe his orders, follow his prescriptions, and then depend upon his power and goodness to do all that for your souls which their case calls for. What his mother said to the servants at the marriage in Cana, John 2. 5. is my charge to you: *Whatsoever he saith unto you do it*, tho' displeasing to flesh and blood, and then he will *turn water into wine*, and you shall want for nothing. Trust your souls with Jesus Christ, and *know whom you have trusted*, even one who *is able to keep what we have committed to him against that day*.

Lastly, If we must not despise our own souls, we must not despise the souls of others. If ours be precious, so are theirs; and if we ought in love to our own souls to do all we can for their salvation, which is the true self-love, certainly the great commandment, which binds us to *love our neighbour as ourselves*, binds us to do all we can for the salvation of the souls of others.—It certainly obligeth us to take heed of doing any thing to the prejudice of the souls of others. Those despise their brethrens souls that care not what stumbling-blocks and occasions of sin they lay in their way, by their abuse of their christian liberty; nor how much
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they contribute to the wickedness of the wicked, and to the grief and trouble of the spirits of good people. Destroy not those souls that are the *work of God*, the purchase of Christ, *for whom Christ died*, 1 Cor. 8. 11. Be afraid of doing any thing to discourage those that are weak in their way to heaven. Christ will not quench the smoking flax, do not you then. Be tender of tender consciences, and despise not those who scruple that in which you are free, or insult over them for their weakness.—Nor is it enough that we do not put contempt upon our brethrens souls, but we must put a value upon them, and be ready to do them all the service we can. All the children of men that dwell on the face of all the earth, *Turks* and heathens, *Moors* and *Indians*, the negroes that are bought and sold, have precious souls, that are capable of knowing and glorifying and enjoying God, and must be ever either happy or miserable. O that this were more thought of, and that the souls of such were not despised as they are! *In God's hand is the soul of all mankind*, and therefore they should be much upon our hearts. This is a good reason why we should *pray for all men*, that God's name may be sanctified, and his will done by all men on earth, as it is done by angels in heaven; because they have all precious souls, capable of this honour and work. Thus we must *honour all men*.

Pity self-destroying sinners, that are damning their own souls, and if you can do any thing, have compassion upon them, and help them. We should justly condemn ourselves, as not having the value we ought to have for human life, if we saw a madman ready to cut his own throat, and did not interpose to prevent it; may we not justly then charge it upon ourselves that we have not the value we ought to have for human souls, when we
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see wicked people that are beside themselves running headlong upon the destruction of their own souls, and never shew any concern about it? Observe what an emphasis the apostle lays upon this, in the encouragement he gives us to do our utmost for the converting of sinners from the error of their ways, That they who do so shall *save a soul from death*, James 5. 19, 20, There is a soul in the case, and therefore we should think nothing too much to do to help it.

Pity self-disquieting saints, whose souls are troubled and cast down, who are of a sorrowful spirit, and go mourning from day to day. Put *your souls into their souls stead*, and then, instead of despising them, (as those are apt to do that are wholly at ease) try what you can do to *strengthen them with your mouth*; and let *the moving of your lips* be, if possible, to *assuage their grief*, and to help them out of that horrible pit and miry clay, *considering yourselves, lest ye also be tempted*.

Especially have a tender regard to the souls of those that are under your charge. O do not despise them; let it not be an indifferent thing to you whether the souls of your children and servants be saved or damned; as it plainly is to those that never teach them the things that belong to their peace, that never pray with them, or for them, nor take any care to restrain them from doing evil, or quicken them to do well. They forget how precious their souls are, and what an opportunity they have of doing them a kindness. You would think yourselves barbarous and unjust if you did not provide what is fitting for their bodies, and are you not much more so if you provide not what is necessary for their souls? O that the souls of your poor children might be dear to you! They derive corruption thro' your loins, and therefore nothing should be wanting on your part to get that hereditary

editary disease cured. You should *travel in birth again, to see Christ formed in them.* Let it be much more your care to get them fit to live in heaven, than fit to live in this world; to get their souls enriched and established with grace, than to raise estates for them: And let this be the top of your ambition concerning them, that they may be praising God on earth, when you are praising him in heaven; and, that you and they may be together for ever praising him. It will be so, if you really have the value you ought to have for their souls, and for your own.

S E R M O N IX.

The Christian Religion not a Sect, and yet every where spoken against.

A C T S XXVIII. 22.

—For as concerning this Sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.

WOULD you think that such a spiteful scornful word as this should ever be said of the Christian religion, that pure religion and undefiled, which came into the world supported by the strongest evidences of truth, and recommended by the most endearing allurements of grace and goodness; that sacred institution which scatters the brightest rays of divine light and love, that ever were darted from heaven to earth? That is it
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which is here so invidiously called a Sect, and is said to be every where spoken against.—It will be worth while to observe,

1. Who they were that said this. They were the chief of the Jews that were at *Rome*, v. 17. The Jews were looked upon (at least they looked upon themselves) as a very knowing people; the Jews at *Rome*, a place of learning and enquiry, thought themselves more knowing than the other Jews. St. Paul, in his epistle to the *Romans*, ch. 17. 2—20. takes notice of it: “Thou art called a Jew, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will,—and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness,” &c. And we have reason to suppose, that the chief of the Jews there, who had the greatest advantages of education and correspondence, were the most intelligent. It might also be justly expected, that upon the first notices of the gospel, the Jews should have been of all people most ready to acquaint themselves with a religion which was so much the honour and perfection of their own; and yet, it seems, the Jews, the chief of the Jews at *Rome*, knew no more of christianity but this, that it was a sect every where spoken against. *This we know*, say they, and it was all they knew concerning it.—The Jews were of all other the most bitter and inveterate enemies to the christians. While the Roman emperors tolerated them, (as they did till *Nero’s* time) the Jews, with an unwearied malice, persecuted them from city to city. Now one would think they would not have been so vigorous and industrious to suppress christianity, if they had not very well acquainted themselves with it, and known it to deserve such opposition. But it seems by this, they knew little or nothing of the religion they so much maligned, had never searched into the merits of
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its cause, nor weighed the proofs of its divine authority; but against all law and reason condemned it, (*διὰ τὴν φήμην*, as *Justin Martyr* complains) purely upon common fame; and followed the cry to run it down, because it was every where spoken against.

2. Upon what occasion they said this. They were now appointing a time to discourse with *St. Paul* upon the grand question in debate, Whether *Jesus of Nazareth* were the true *Messiah* or no? And they seemed willing to hear what that great man had to say in defence of the religion he preached: *We desire*, say they, *to hear of thee what thou thinkest*. Now one would expect that so good a cause, managed by such a skilful advocate, could not but be victorious, and that they would all have been brought over to the belief of christianity; but we find, *v. 24.* that it proved otherwise. After all, there were those that believed not; and the text intimates the reason of their infidelity: they came to hear the word under a prejudice; they had already imbibed an ill opinion of the way, which, right or wrong, they resolved to hold fast. And tho' some of them, by the help of divine grace, got over this stumbling-block, who like the *Bereans* were more noble than the rest, and of freer thought, yet many of them continued under the power of those prejudices, and were sealed up under unbelief, *v. 26, 27.* Thus is the power of the word in many baffled by the power of prejudice: They do not believe, because they are resolved they will not: They conclude that no good thing can come out of *Nazareth*, and will not be persuaded to come and see. Thus do they prejudge the cause, answering the matter before they hear it, and it will prove folly and shame to them, *Prov. 18. 13. John 7. 51.*

Now in the account they here give of their knowledge of the christian religion, we may observe,

I. That they looked upon it to be a Sect, and we will prove that to be false.

II. A Sect every where spoken against, and we will grant that to be true, tho' it is most unreasonable and unjust it should be so.

I. The christian religion is here called (but mis-called) a * Sect, *αἵρεσις*, a heresy. *After the way which they call heresy, (saith St. Paul, Acts 24. 14.) so worship I the God of my fathers.—The Sect of the Nazarenes;* so *Tertullus* calls it in his opening the indictment against *Paul*, Acts 24. 5. It is called *this way*, Acts 9. 2. and *that way*, Acts 19. 9. as if it were a by-path out of the common road. The practice of serious godliness is still looked upon by many as a Sect, that is a party-business, and a piece of affected singularity in opinion and practice, tending to promote some carnal design, by creating and supporting invidious distinctions among men. This is the proper notion of a Sect, and therefore the masters and maintainers of Sects are justly in an ill name, as enemies to the great corporation of mankind; but there is not the least colour of reason to put this invidious and scandalous character on the christian religion; however it may be mistaken and misrepresented, it is very far from being really a Sect. There were sects of religion among the Jews; we read of the sect of the Sadduces, Acts 5. 17. which was built on peculiar notions, such as overturned the foundation of natural religion, by denying a future state of rewards and punishments. There was also the

* *Ἀιρεσις* Electio, optio. An opinion not forced upon us by the evidences of truth, but chosen by us with some foreign design.

Sect of the Pharisees, *Acts* 15. 5. the *straitest Sect of their religion*, *Acts* 26 5. which was founded in the observance and imposition of singular rites and customs, with an affected separation from, and contempt of all mankind. These were Sects; but there is nothing of the spirit and genius of these in the christian religion, as it was instituted by its great Author.

1. True christianity establisheth that which is of common concernment to all mankind, and therefore is not a Sect. The truths and precepts of the everlasting gospel are perfective of, and no way repugnant to, the light and law of natural religion. Is that a Sect which gives such mighty encouragements and assistances to those that *in every nation fear God, and work righteousness?* *Acts* 10. 34. Is that a Sect which tends to nothing else but to reduce the revolted race of mankind to their ancient allegiance to the great Creator, and to renew that image of God upon man, which was his primitive rectitude and felicity? Is that a Sect which proclaims *God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself*, and recovering it from that degenerate and deplorable state, into which it was sunk? Is that a Sect which publisheth *good-will towards men*, and *Christ the Lamb of God, taking away the sins of the world?* Surely, that which concurs so much with the uncorrupted and unprejudiced sentiments, and conduceth much more to the true and real happiness of all mankind, cannot be thought to take its rise from such narrow opinions, and private interests, as Sects owe their original to.

2. True christianity hath a direct tendency to the uniting of the children of men, and the *gathering them together in one*; and therefore is far from being a Sect, which is supposed to lead to division *.

* Secta dicitur à secando.

and to sow discord among brethren. The preaching of the gospel did indeed prove the occasion of contention. Our Saviour foresaw and foretold it would be so, *Luke* 12. 51, 52, 53; that his disciples and followers would be *men of strife*, in the same sense that the prophet was, *Jer.* 15. 10. not men *striving*, but men *striven with*; but the gospel was by no means the cause of this contention, for it was intended to be the cure of all contention. If there be any who, under the cloak and colour of the christian name, cause divisions, and propagate feuds and quarrels among men, let them bear their own burthen; but it is certain that the christian religion, as far as it obtains its just power and influence upon the minds of men, will make them meek and quiet, humble and peaceable, loving and useful, condescending and forgiving, and every way easy and acceptable, and profitable one to another. Is that a Sect which was introduced with a proclamation of *peace on earth*? That which *beats swords into plow-shares, and spears into pruning-hooks*? Or was he the author of a Sect, who is the great center of unity, and who died to break down *partition-walls*, and to *slay all enmities*, that he might *gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad*? Was he the author of a Sect, who came into the world *not to destroy mens lives, but to save them*; and who taught his followers not only to love one another, but to *love their enemies*, and to count every one their neighbour, that they could be any way serviceable to?

3. True christianity aims at no wordly benefit or advantage, and therefore must by no means be called a Sect. Those that espouse a Sect, are supposed to be governed in it by their secular interest, and to aim at wealth, or honour, or the gratification of some base lust. The pharisees proved themselves to be a Sect, by their thirst after the

praise of men, and their greedy devouring of widows houses: But the professors of christianity have not only been taught by the law of their religion, to live above this world, and to look upon it with a holy contempt, but have been exposed by their profession to the loss and ruin of all their secular comforts and enjoyments. Are those to be accounted politick and designing sectaries that have for Christ chearfully *suffered the loss of all things?* Is that a Sect, which instead of preferring a man to honour, or raising him an estate, lays him open to disgrace and poverty, renders him obnoxious to fines and forfeitures, banishments and imprisonments, racks and tortures, flames and gibbets, which were the common lot of the primitive christians? *Cæsar Vaninus*, a sworn enemy to the christian religion, and one who was industrious in searching out objections against it, owned that he could find nothing in it that favoured of a carnal and worldly design: No, it hath always approved itself a *heavenly calling*, and the strictest professors of it (even their enemies themselves being judges) have had *their conversation in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom*, 2 Cor. 1. 12. Very unjustly therefore is it called a Sect. As to this, therefore, suffer a word of caution and exhortation.

1.) Let us take heed lest our profession of religion degenerate into any thing which may make it look like a Sect. Christianity, as it was instituted by Christ, is not a Sect; let not christians then be Sectaries. We make our profession of religion a Sect, when we monopolize the church and its ministry and sacraments, and spend that zeal in matters of *doubtful disputation* which should be reserved for the *weightier matters of the law*, Rom. 14. 17, 18. When we place our religion in *meats and drinks*, which should be placed in *righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*; when we profess

religion with a conceit of ourselves, and a contempt of others, and with any worldly secular design; when we sacrifice the common interests of Christ's kingdom to the particular interests of a party; and, in a word, when our profession is tainted with the *leaven of the Pharisees*, Luke 12. 1. which is both souring and swelling; then it degenerates into a Sect. Let us therefore adhere to the sure and large foundations, and be acted by a principle of love to, and so maintain communion with, *all that in every place*, and under every denomination, *call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.* Let us be modest in our opinions, charitable and candid in our censures, self-denying in all our converse, acting always under the influence of that *wisdom which is from above, which is first pure and then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and hypocrisy*; so that we may *put to silence the ignorance of those who call religion a Sect.*

2.) Let us not be deterred from serious godliness, or any of the instances of it, by the invidious name of a Sect, which is put upon it. If a strict and sober and circumspect conversation, a conscientious government of our tongue, praying, and singing psalms in our families, a religious observation of the Lord's day, a diligent attendance upon the means of grace, joining in religious societies for prayer and christian conference, and endeavouring, in our places, the suppression of profaneness and immorality; if these and the like be called and counted the marks and badges of a Sect, let us not be moved at it, but say as *David* did, 2 Sam. 6. 22. *If this be to be vile, I will be yet more vile.* If the practice of piety be branded as a Sect, it is better for us to come under the reproaches of men for following it, than under the curse of God for neglecting it. *It is a very small thing to be judged*

judged of man's judgment, but he that judgeth us is the Lord: Let us therefore be more afraid of being Sectaries, than of being called so.

II. The christian religion is here said to be *every where spoken against*. That it was spoken against, was evident enough: but that it was *every where* spoken against, was more than they could be sure of: They did not know all places, nor had they intelligence from every country; but we must not wonder if those that oppose the truth as it is in Jesus, make no conscience of transgressing the laws of truth in common conversation. We may suppose that the acquaintance of these Jews at Rome lay mostly with those that were enemies to christianity, and they concluded it every where spoken against, because they found it spoken against in all places that they came to, or had advice from. Thus apt are we to embrace that as a general sentiment and observation which we find received by those that we usually associate with; and so we run ourselves into mistakes, which larger and more impartial enquiries would soon rectify.

But we will take it for granted, however, that what they said was true, not because they said it, but because the experience of all ages confirms it, and concurs with it: So that a little acquaintance with books and the world will prove the observation which we ground upon the text:

That it is, and always has been, the lot of Christ's holy religion, to be every where spoken against.

For the improvement of this general observation, I shall inquire who and what it is in christianity that is spoken against.—Then shew you the cause.—And lastly draw some inferences from this subject.

First, Who, and what it is that is spoken against?

I. Jesus Christ, the author of our religion, is every where spoken against. When the first-begotten

begotten was brought into the world, old *Simeon*, among other great things, pronounced this concerning him, that he was a *sign which should be spoken against*, and by that means was set for the fall of many, *Luke 2*. [This was abundantly verified.] It was not the least of his sufferings in the days of his flesh, that *he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself*, *Heb. 12. 3*. They spoke against his person as mean and contemptible, having *no form, nor comeliness*, *Isa. 53. 2*. They spoke against his preaching as false and deceiving, *John 7. 12*. as factious and seditious, *Luke 23. 2*. as senseless and ridiculous, for the Pharisees derided him for it, *Luke 16. 14*. They spoke against his miracles as done in confederacy with Belzebub the prince of the devils, *Mat. 12. 24*. They spoke against his morals, charging him with blasphemy against God, profanation of the sabbath-day, and all the instances of debauchery which were usually met with in a *gluttonous man, a wine-bibber, and a friend of publicans and sinners*, *Mat. 11. 19*. They spoke against his followers as a company of ignorant despicable people, *John 7. 48, 49*. When he was in his sufferings, if you pass thro' all the stages of them, you will find him every where spoken against. They reproached him in all his offices; in his office of teaching, when they challenged him to tell who smote him: In his office of saving, when they challenged him to save himself as he had saved others: In his office of ruling, when they challenged him to prove himself the king of the Jews by coming down from the cross. The common people spoke against him, even *they that passed by reviled him*. The Pharisees and chief priests, the grandees of the church were as severe as any in their reflections on him. *Princes also did sit and speak against him*. *Herod* and his men of war set him at nought, made nothing of him that made all things.

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Nay, even now he is set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, *far above all principalities and powers*, i. e. both good and evil angels, so as to be no more hurt by the contradictions of the one, than he is benefited by the adorations of the other; yet still he is spoken against. Besides the contempt cast upon him by the *Jews* and *Mahometans*, are there not *with us*, even *with us*, those that daringly speak against him? [Some professing christians] are daily speaking against him as a mere man, or a mere name. Atheists and Deists speak against him as a mere cheat, accounting the religion he established a great imposture, and his gospel a jest. Profane and ignorant people speak slightly of him, as if our *Beloved* were no *more than another Beloved*; Cant. 5. 9. and some speak scornfully of him, as *Julian* the apostate did, that called him in disdain *the Galilean*, and *the Carpenter's Son*. Such as these are the *hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him*: the Lord rebuke them, even the Lord that hath chosen *Jerusalem*.

2. God himself, the great object of our religious regards, is every where spoken against. Not only is the christian religion thus attacked by virulent and blasphemous tongues, but even natural religion also. The glorious and blessed God, the great Creator and Benefactor of the Universe, even he is every where spoken against. Some deny his Being. Tho' his Existence be so necessary, so evident, that if He be not, it is impossible any thing else should be; yet there are *fools* who *say in their hearts*, what they dare not speak out, that *there is no God*, Psal. 14. 1. And he that saith there is no God, wisheth there were none, and if he could help it there should be none. Others blaspheme the attributes of God; they charge the all-seeing eye with blindness, saying, *The Lord shall not see*; they charge the Eternal Mind with forgetfulness,

ness, saying, *God hath forgotten*; they charge the Almighty Arm with impotency, saying, *Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?* which is called *speaking against God*, *Psal. 78.* Those speak against God that promise themselves impunity in sin, saying, *They shall not surely die*; or that boldly avow their impiety and irreligion, saying to the Almighty, *Depart from us.*—Some speak *meanly* of God, tho' He is infinitely great and glorious; others speak *hardly* of Him, tho' He is infinitely just and good.—The name of God is spoken against by the prophane using of it; so it is construed, *Psal. 139. 20. They speak against thee wickedly, thine enemies take thy name in vain.* Can there be a greater slight put upon the eternal God, than for men to use his sacred and blessed name as a by-word, with which they give vent to their exorbitant passions, or fill up the vacancies of their other idle words? The name of God is thus abused not only by those that belch out bloody oaths and curses, which make the ears of every good man to tingle, but by those that mention the name of God slightly and irreverently in their common conversation, in whose *mouh*s he is near when he is far from their reins. To use those forms of speech which properly signify an acknowledgment and adoration of God's Being, as *O God!* or *O Lord!* or an appeal to his omniscience, as *God knows*; or an invocation of his favour, as *God bless me*, or *Lord have mercy upon me*: I say, to use these or the like expressions impertinently, intending thereby to express only our wonder or surprize, or our passionate resentments, or any thing but that which is their proper and awful signification, is an evidence of a vain mind, that wants a due regard to *that glorious and fearful name, The Lord our God.* I see not that the prophanation of the ordinance of praying is any better than the prophanation of the ordinance of swearing. The
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serious consideration of this, I hope, will prevent much of that dishonour which is done to God, and to his holy name, by some that run not with others to an excess of riot. ——— The providence of God is likewise every where spoken against by murmurers and complainers, that quarrel with it, and find fault with the disposal of it, and when they are *hardly bestead, curse their King and their God*. Thus is the mouth of the ungodly set against the heavens, and their tongue walketh thro' the earth.

3. The word of God, the great rule of our religion, is every where spoken against. So it was when it was first preached; wherever the apostles went preaching the doctrine of Christ they met with those that *spake against it, contradicting and blaspheming*, Acts 13. 45. So it is now it is written: Atheists speak against the scriptures as not of authority; Papists speak against it as dark and uncertain, further than it is expounded, and supported by the authority of their church, which receives unwritten traditions with the same pious affection and reverence that they receive the scriptures; nay, and if we may judge by their practice, with much more. Thus is the word of God blasphemed by them, who call themselves *The temple of the Lord*. But if we take away revelation, as the Deists do, all religion will soon be lost; and if we derogate from the scriptures, as the Papists do, all revelation is much endangered.—Those also speak against the scriptures who prophanely jest with them; and, that they may the more securely rebel against scripture laws, make themselves and their idle companions merry with the scripture language: *The word of the Lord is unto them a reproach*, as the prophet complains, Jer. 6. 10. And another prophet found it so, whose serious word of the necessity of *precept upon precept* was turned into an idle song, (as Grotius understands it) Isa. 28. 13.

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The word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept—Very likely it was done by the drunkards of *Ephraim*, spoken of *v. 1.* and it gave occasion to that caution, *v. 22.* *Be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong.* Profligate and debauched minds relish no wit like that which ridicules the sacred text, and exposeth that to contempt; as of old the insulting *Babylonians* must be humoured with the songs of *Sion*; *Psal. 137. 3.* and no cups can please *Belsazzar* in his drunken frolick but the sacred vessels of the temple, *Dan. 5. 2, 3.* Thus industrious are the powers of darkness to vilify the scriptures, and make them contemptible; but he that sits in heaven shall laugh at them, for in spite of all the little efforts of their impotent malice, *He will magnify the law, and make it honourable,* according to the word which he hath spoken.

4. The people of God, the professors of this religion, are every where spoken against. Not only those of some particular persuasion or denomination, but such in general as are zealous in fearing God and working righteousness. Our blessed Saviour has told his disciples what treatment of this kind they must expect; that they should be reviled, and have *all manner of evil said against them falsely*; that they and their names should be *cast out as evil.* And if they called our master *Belzebub*, no nick-names fastened on his followers can seem strange. Mocking was an old way of persecuting the covenant-seed, for thus *He that was after the flesh, betimes persecuted them that were after the spirit.* Compare *Gen. 21. 9.* with *Gal. 4. 29.* God's heritage hath always been *as a speckled bird*, which *all the birds are against*, *Jer. 12. 9.* Even Wisdom's children have been called and counted *fools*, and *their life madness*: the quiet in the land represented as enemies to the publick peace, and those who are the greatest blessings of the age, branded

branded as the *troublers of Israel*. The primitive christians were painted out to the world under the blackest and most odious characters that could be, as men of the most profligate lives and consciences, and that even placed their religion in the grossest impieties and immoralities imaginable. Their enemies found it necessary, for the support of the kingdom of the devil, the father of lies and slanders, to characterize them as the worst of men, to whom they were resolved to give the worst and most barbarous treatment. It had not been possible to have baited them, if they had not first dressed them up in the skins of wild beasts. And as then, so ever since, more or less in all ages of the church, reproach hath been entailed upon the most serious and zealous professors of religion and godliness.

5. The ministers of Christ, the preachers of this religion, are with a distinguishing enmity every where spoken against. Under the Old Testament God's messenger and his prophets were generally mocked and misused, and it was *Jerusalem's* measure-filling sin, 2 *Chron.* 36, 16. It was one of the devices they devised against *Jeremiah*, to *smite him with the tongue*, because they would not, and they desired that others might not, *give heed to any of his words*, Jer. 18. 18. Those to whom the prophet *Ezekiel* was as a very lovely song, and who *with their mouths shewed much love to him*, yet were still *talking against him by the walls, and in the doors of their houses*, Ezek. 33. 30. It is not strange then if the ministers of the New Testament (in which truth shines with a stronger light) be with no less enmity spoken against by those that love darkness rather than light. The apostles, those prime ministers of state in Christ's kingdom, were so loaded with reproach, that they were made a *spectacle to*
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*the world**, a spectacle of pity to those that had either grace or good-nature, but a spectacle of scorn to those that had neither. They were trampled upon as the *filth of the world, the off-scouring of all things, even unto this day*; after they had in so many instances approved themselves well, and could not but be made manifest in the consciences of their worst enemies. And it hath all-along been the policy of the church's enemies by all means possible to bring the ministry into contempt.

6. The christian religion itself hath been, and still is every where spoken against. The truths of it contradicted as false and groundless, the great doctrines of the mediation of Christ, and the resurrection of the dead, were ridiculed by the *Athenian* philosophers, *Acts* 19. 18, 32. The laws of it censured as grievous and unreasonable, as hard sayings, which could not be borne, by those who bid open defiance to the obligation of them, and say, *Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us*, *Psal.* 2. 3. The ordinances of it despised as mean. Sabbaths mocked at, as of old, *Lam.* 1. 7.† and the sanctification of them represented as only a cloak for idleness. Sacraments reproached, and the sacred memorial of Christ's death and sufferings, by the persecutors of the primitive christians represented to the world as the bloody and inhuman killing and eating of a child‡, and their love-feasts and holy kifs (which were then in use) as only introductions to the most abominable uncleanness. Primitive christianity was industriously put into an ill name; it was called emphatically *The Atheism*, because it overthrew idolatry, and undermined the false gods and wor-

* *Θέατρον ἐγερνῶντες*—the theatre they played upon.

† —*Cui septima quæque fuit lux ignava*—Juvenal. *Sat.* 5.

‡ *Dicimur sceleratissimi de sacramento infanticidii, & pabulo inde, & post convivium incesto, &c.* Tertull. *Apol.* c. 7.

ships that had so long obtained. This was the outcry at *Ephesus*, that if *Paul's* doctrine took place, *the temple of the great goddess would be despised*, Acts 19. 26, 27. It was also branded as a novelty, and an upstart doctrine, because it took people off from that vain conversation which they had received by tradition from their fathers, 1 Pet. 1. 18. It was called at *Athens* a new doctrine, Acts 17. 18, 19. and industriously represented in all places as a mushroom sect, that was but of yesterday. It was looked upon as nearly allied to Judaism, because it was so much supported by the scriptures of the Old Testament, and nothing was more despicable among the *Romans* than the Jews and their religion. The professors of christianity were looked upon as unlearned and ignorant men, Acts 4. 12. the very dregs and refuse of the people. *Julian* forbade the calling of them christians, and would have them called nothing but *Galileans*, thereby to expose them to the contempt of those who are (as indeed most people are) governed more by a sound of words than by the reason of things. Thus when the devil was silenced in his oracles (as it is well known he was upon the setting up of christianity in the world) his mouth was opened in lies and slanders; and being forced to quit his pretensions to a Deity, he appears barefaced, as a devil, Διάβολος, a false accuser.

The reformed religion in these latter ages hath been in like manner spoken against: Though it maintains all that doctrine, and that only, which Christ and his apostles preached, and was before Luther there, where popery, as such, never was before or since, i. e. in the holy scriptures; yet the professors and preachers of it have been called and counted hereticks and schismatics, and by all possible artifices exposed to the odium of the people, that none might buy or sell, i. e. have the benefit and

comfort of civil society and commerce, that *had not the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name*, Rev. 13. 17.—Nay even among some that profess the christian and reformed religion, yet the practice of serious godliness is very much spoken against. The power of religion is not only disliked and denied, but contradicted and condemned by those that rest in the form. They that *call the evil good*, will *call the good, evil*; and it is not strange if they, who abandon themselves to work all uncleanness with greediness, speak ill of such as run not with them to the same excess of riot: *where the wicked walk on every side, he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey*. The old enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent is still working, and the old game every day played over again. The truth as it is in Jesus, and the truth which is according to godliness, will be contradicted by those that lie in wait to deceive. Bigots on all sides will have something to say against catholick charity and moderation: They that are fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, and forward to every good work, must expect to be evil spoken of by such as affect a lukewarmness and indifferency in religion: Nor can those who walk circumspectly, escape the lash of their tongues who walk loosely, as the fools in *Israel*.

I come now in the *Second* place to enquire what is the reason that so holy and excellent a religion as christianity is, meets with such hard usage, and is thus every where spoken against: When we hear such an out-cry as this made against christianity, it is natural for us to enquire as *Pilate* did, when such a clamour was raised against its author, *Why, what evil hath it done?* Truly we may say of it, as *Pilate* did of him, *We find no fault in it*. Which of all its opposers convinceth it of sin or error? It invades no man's right, breaks in upon no man's property,

property, is no disturbance of the peace, no enemy to the welfare of families and societies, is no prejudice at all to the interests of states and princes, but to all these highly beneficial and advantageous: Why then is it thus accused, condemned and spoken against?

1. The adversaries of religion speak against it because they do not know it. Sound knowledge hath not a greater enemy in the world than ignorance. Our Lord Jesus was despised and hated by the world, because *the world knew him not*, John 1. 10. If they had known the dignity of his person, the excellency of his doctrine, and the gracious design and purpose of his coming into the world, certainly they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. They that did it, knew not what they did. No man will speak against religion and the power of it, that hath either seriously weighed the proofs and evidences of it, or impartially tried the comfort and benefit of it. If they knew this inestimable gift of God, instead of speaking against it, they would covet it earnestly as the best gift. He that contents himself with a distant and transient view of the practice of piety, will perhaps take up hard thoughts of it; but a better acquaintance will rectify the mistake. The people of God are called his hidden ones, and their life is a hidden life, their way is above; and therefore it is that the world speaks evil of them, because it knows them not. How unjust then and unreasonable is the enmity and malice of the adversaries of religion, to condemn what they never enquired into, and to load that with the vilest reproaches, which, for ought they know, merits the highest encomiums! And how excellent are the ways of God, which none speak ill of but those that are unacquainted with them! while those that know

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them, witness to the goodness of them, and *wisdom is justified of her children.*

2. They speak against it, because they do not like it; and we know ill-will never speaks well. Tho' they have little acquaintance with religion, yet they know this concerning it in general, that it is not agreeable with the way of their hearts, which they are resolved to walk in, nor with the course of this world, which is the chart and compass they steer by, and from which they take their measures. They know this, that it lays a restraint on their appetites and passions, and consists much in the mortifying their beloved lusts and corruptions; and therefore they have a secret antipathy to it: *The carnal mind, which is enmity against God, is so against all who bear the image of God.* Christ hath bid his disciples to expect the hatred of the world, and not to marvel at it. They who hate to be themselves reformed, will never love those that are reformed: Out of the abundance therefore of the heart, and the malignity that is there, it is no marvel if the mouth speak. The daring sinner that stretcheth out his hand against God, finds it too short to reach him; but, say they, *with our tongue we will prevail, our lips are our own,* Psal. 12. 4. The beast that made war with heaven, Rev. 13. 5, 6. tho' he had ten horns, and those crowned, yet is not described doing mischief with them, but *opening his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.*

3. They speak against religion because it speaks against them. They who have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, *hate the light* which discovers them. Why were the Pharisees so exasperated against our saviour, but because he spake his parables against them, and laid them open in their own colours? Why did the world hate him
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who so loved the world, but because he *testified of it that its works are evil*? Why did *Ahab* hate *Micaiah*, and call *Elijah* his enemy, but because they were the faithful reprovers of his wickedness, and never prophesied good concerning him, but evil. Why did the inhabitants of the earth rejoice when *the witnesses were slain*, but because those two prophets, by their plain and powerful preaching, *tormented them that dwelt upon the earth*? Rev 11. 10. Mat. 24. 14. The everlasting gospel is a testimony, either to us to convince us, or against us to condemn us; and then no wonder if those speak against it, who hate to be convinced by it, and dread to be condemned. The prophet complains of those that *laid snares for him that reproveth in the gate*; and why is it that faithful ministers are so much hated, but because their business is to *shew people their transgressions*? If they would flatter sinners that flatter themselves in a sinful way, and cry peace to them to whom the God of heaven doth not speak peace, they might avoid a great deal of reproach and censure; but they dare not do it. They are not to make a new law and gospel, but to preach that which is made. They have their rule in that caution given to the prophet, Jer. 15. 19. Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them. The hearts and lives of men must be brought to comply with the word of God; for the word of God can never be made to comply with the humours and fancies of men. Ministers, as they would not for the world make the way to heaven any straiter or narrower than Christ has made it; so they dare not make it any broader or easier, nor offer life and salvation on any other terms than the gospel hath already settled. If they aim at *pleasing men*, they cannot approve themselves the *servants of Christ*; and therefore are they so much spoken against. And the same is the reason why

the most strict and serious christians are so much spoken against, because their piety and devotion, their justice and sobriety, their zeal and charity, is a standing reproof to the wicked world, and condemns it, as the faith and holy fear of *Noah*, condemned the infidelity and security of the old world, *Heb. 11. 7.* Wherefore doth the blood-thirsty hate and revile the upright, but for the same reason for which *Cain* hated *Abel*, *because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.*

P A R T II.

A P P L I C A T I O N.

1. Let us admire the patience of God, in that he bears so much and so long with those that thus speak against him and his holy religion. The affront hereby given him is very great, and (we should think) intolerable: hard speeches that reflect upon an infinite Majesty, have in them a kind of infinite malignity. He hears and knows all that is said against him, his truth and ways, and as a jealous God resents it. He hath always power in his hands to punish the proudest of his enemies; nor would their immediate ruin be any loss to him: and yet *sentence against these evil words and works is not executed speedily.* Be astonished, O heavens! at this, and wonder, O earth! that these wretches which rebel against the beams of such light and glory, which spurn at the bowels of such love and grace, are not immediately made the visible monuments of divine wrath and vengeance; and, like *Sodom* and *Gomorrab*, set forth for an example! That the blasphemers and scoffers of these last days are not instantly struck dumb, struck dead. That he who hath so much said against him, yet doth himself keep silence, and doth not answer all these reproaches in thunder and lightning. Tho' his
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forbearance is turned to his reproach, even by those that have the benefit of it, who therefore think him *altogether such an one as themselves*, and take occasion from his patience to question his faithfulness, and challenge his justice, saying, *Where is the promise of his coming?* Yet he bears, and his patience is stretched out even to long-suffering, because he is *not willing that any should perish*, nor that any means should be left untried to prevent their perishing. But there is a day coming, a dreadful day, when *our God shall come, and shall no longer keep silence*; a day foretold in the early ages of the world, by *Enoch the seventh from Adam*, Jude 14. when judgment shall be executed upon ungodly sinners, *for all their hard speeches*, which day he will not anticipate. It is agreeable to the regular course of justice, that all judgments be adjourned till the judgment-day, and all executions deferred till execution-day: And therefore now he condescends to reason with those that speak against him, for their conviction, as he doth by the prophet, *Ezek. 18. 25, &c.* where he fairly debates the case with those who said, *The way of the Lord is not equal*; That every mouth may be stopped with an unanswerable argument, before it be stopped with an irreverfible fentence; and thofe who have fspoken againft him, may be fent fpeechlefs to hell. He keeps f Silence now, becaufe when he doth fpeak, *he will be juftified*. When our Lord Jefus was here upon earth, with what an invincible patience did he *endure the contradiction of finners!* When fo many ill things were witneffed againft him, he was filent to admiration, answered not a word to all their unjuft accusations; but at the fame time he bound them over to the judgment of the great day, by that awful word, *Mat. 26. 64. Hereafter ye fhall fee the Son of Man fitting on the right hand of the power*; and ftill he bears in expectation of that fame day.

And, by the way, we may infer from hence, that those who would be like their heavenly father, must bear reproach and contradiction patiently. When any thing is said against us, reflecting never so little disparagement upon us, or our families, our resentments of it are very sensible, and we are apt to take it heinously; nay, and to say *we do well to be angry*, for it is not a thing to be endured. Not to be endured! O think how much God bears with the reproach cast upon his great name, and that will surely qualify our resentments of any indignity done to our little names! Who are we, that we must not be spoken against? Or what are our sayings, that they must not be contradicted? Such affronts as these we should learn to bear, as *David* did when *Shimei* cursed him, *So let him curse*; and as the son of *David* did when his enemies reviled him, *Blessing them that curse us, and praying for them that thus persecute us, that we may be the children of our Father which is in heaven*. God adjourns his vindication to the great day, and so ought we as *St. Paul* doth, *1 Cor. 4. 5.*

2. Let us acknowledge the power of divine grace, in keeping up the christian religion in the world, notwithstanding the universal opposition it hath met with. One would think, that a way thus spoken against every where, should have been long ere this lost and ruined, and the christian name cut off, to be no more in remembrance; which its adversaries have so industriously endeavoured. If it had been of men, it had certainly come to nought quickly, tho' they had let it alone; but being of God, it was to admiration victorious over all opposition, *Acts 5. 38.* A sect, a cheat, could never have supported itself against so much contradiction; no human power or policy could have kept it up, nor any thing less than an Almighty arm. The continuance of the christian religion in the world
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to this day, is a standing miracle for the conviction of its adversaries, and the confirmation of the faith of those that adhere to it. When we consider what a mighty force was raised by the powers of darkness against christianity, when it was in its infancy; how many they were that spoke against it, learned men, and great men; books were written, laws were made against it; those that spoke for it, how few were they! and how mean and despicable! the foolish things of the world, and the weak; and yet we see the word of God mightily growing and prevailing: Must we not needs say, *This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?* The several false religions of the heathens, tho' they gave very little opposition one to another, yet having no foundation in truth, all dwindled to nothing: after the mighty sway they had borne, and all means possible used to support them, at length their day came to fall; their oracles were silenced, their altars deserted, and the Gods themselves *perished from the earth*. We may ask triumphantly, not only, *Where are the gods of Humath and Arpad?* &c. those obscure and petty deities? (2 Kings 18. 34.) But where are the gods of *Babylon and Egypt, Greece and Rome?* the illustrious names of *Saturn and Jupiter, Juno and Diana?* Where are the gods which our *British and Saxon* ancestors worshipped, before they received the light of the glorious gospel? Are they not all forgotten, as dead men out of mind, and their names written in the dust? But Christ's holy religion, tho' for some ages it was utterly destitute of all secular supports and advantages, and was assaulted on all hands by the most vigorous attacks of its daring and most implacable enemies; yet it hath strangely weathered its point, and is in being; and, thanks be to God, in some places in a flourishing state to this day. Let us turn aside now, and see this great sight, a *bush burning, and yet*
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not consumed; and say, *the Lord is in it of a truth*. Come and see the captain of our salvation riding forth in the chariot of the everlasting gospel, with his crown upon his head, and his bow in his hand, *conquering, and to conquer*. That which was every where spoken against christianity, was like the viper which fastened upon St. *Paul's* hand; it gave people occasion to think very ill concerning it, and to look for its speedy fall; but it hath in all ages shaken those venomous beasts into the fire, and taken no harm, and so hath proved its own divine original. Let us herein acknowledge the wisdom and power of our Lord Jesus, who hath so firmly *built his church upon a rock*, Mat. 16. 18. that *the gates of hell*, i. e. all its powers, and policies, and numbers, could never *prevail against it*. *Mahomet*, tho' he industriously adapted his religion to the sensual appetites of men, whose reason only, and not their lusts, could object against it; yet he obtained no strength nor interest at all, till by a thousand artifices he had got the power of the sword, and with it forbade any, upon pain of death, to speak against him or his doctrine; charging his first followers, who were to propagate his religion, if they met with any that objected against it, not to dispute with them, but to kill them immediately: By which means that grand imposture, in a little time, got some footing in the world, and by the same barbarous and inhuman methods it hath been supported now above a thousand years. And in like manner that great enemy of the church, represented in St. *John's* vision, maintains his interest by causing that *as many as would not worship the image of the beast, should be killed*, Rev. 13. 15. Thus are errors and false religions propagated: strip them of these supports, and they fall to the ground of course. But, on the contrary, the christian religion was planted and preserved not only without,
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but against secular force, recommended and upheld by its own intrinsick truth and excellency, and that divine power which accompanied it. The preachers and professors of it every where spoken against, and yet every where getting ground, and strangely victorious, purely by the *word of their testimony*, and by *not loving their lives unto the death*. Thus *is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ*.

3. Let us greatly lament the folly and wickedness of those who speak against Christ and his holy religion, and if we can do any thing, have compassion upon them, and help to undeceive them, and rectify their mistakes. Surely this is one of the abominations committed among us, for which we should be found among those that *sigh and cry*: this is one instance of the pride of sinners for which our souls should *weep in secret*. Our ears should tingle, and our hearts tremble, to hear the reproach cast upon Christ and his religion. To affect us herewith, let us consider,

1.) The great dishonour hereby done to our God in the world. They that reflect upon his truths and ways, his word and ordinances, reflect upon him: he that toucheth these, toucheth the apple of his eye: If therefore we have any love to God, or concern for his honour, and have cordially espoused the interests of his kingdom, what is an affront to him, will surely be a grief to us. It cannot but be a very melancholy thought to every sensible soul, That the God that made the world is made so light of in it: That he who doth so much good to the children of men, hath so little honour from them, nay, and hath so much dishonour done him by them every day, and his name continually blasphemed: That the Lord Jesus, who so loved the world, is so much hated and despised by the world.

world. The reproaches of them who thus reproach our master, if we be his faithful servants, we should feel as *falling upon us*. If he take what is said and done against his people, as said and done against himself, much more reason have they to find themselves aggrieved in that which is said and done against him. If we pray heartily that God's name may be hallowed, as we should do every day, we should grieve heartily that his name is so much dishonoured. How pathetically doth *Joshua* plead, chap. 7. 9. *What wilt thou do unto thy great name?* And the Psalmist, in the name of the church, *Psal.* 74. 10. *O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever? Arise, O God, plead thine own cause.* Thus should the honour of God and religion lie nearer our hearts than any other concern whatsoever.

2.) Consider the miserable condition of those that presumptuously speak against God and religion. Tho' they may do it with an air of assurance, as if they ran no hazard; *their own tongues will at last fall upon them*, God will *turn their reproach upon their own head*, *Neh.* 4. 4. We have reason to bewail their madness, and to pity, and pray for them, for they know not what they do. Miserable souls! How will they be deceived at last, when they shall find that *God is not mocked!* And that while they were studying to put contempt on religion, they were but preparing eternal shame and confusion for themselves! The Lord is a jealous God, and will not hold them guiltless that thus profane his name: Their wit, and learning, and figure in the world, may embolden them in their sin, and bear them up awhile in an open defiance of all that is sacred, but nothing can prevent their utter ruin besides a sincere repentance; which is unsaying, with shame and self-loathing, all that they have proudly spoken against God and godliness. They that pervert the
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right ways of the Lord, will certainly fall therein; and they that wrest the scriptures, do it *to their own destruction*. Religion's motto is, *Nemo me impune lacessit*. It is ill jesting with edge-tools. They that spurn at the rock of salvation, will not only be unable to remove it, but will find it a *stone of stumbling*, and a *rock of offence*. Those who ridiculed the word of the Lord, were *broken and snared, and taken*, Isa. 28. 13. Let all those therefore that mourn in *Sion*, weep over those that will not weep for themselves; and look with compassion upon those that look upon them with contempt.

3.) Consider the mischief that is hereby done to the souls of others. They who thus err, their error remaineth not with themselves, but this poisonous and malignant breath infects others. Words spoken against religion *eat as doth a canker*; and they who speak them, seldom perish alone in their iniquity, for *many follow their pernicious ways*, 2 Pet. 2. 2. Unwary souls are easily beguiled, and brought to conceive rooted prejudices against that which they hear every where spoken against, and few have consideration and resolution enough to maintain a good opinion of that which they that set up for wits make it their business to cry down. *Sergius Paulus* was a *prudent man*, and yet St. Paul saw him in danger of being turned away from the faith, by the subtle suggestions of *Elymas* the forcerer, which therefore the apostle repented with more than ordinary keenness. It is sad to think how many young people, who perhaps were well educated and hopeful, when they go abroad into the world, by conversing with those who lie in wait to deceive, have their minds insensibly vitiated and debauched, and perhaps they are made *seven times more the children of hell* than those that first seduced them. Under pretence of free-thought and fashionable conversation, and a generous disdain of preciseness and singu-

singularity, atheistical principles are imbibed, the restraints of conscience shaken off, brutish lusts not only indulged, but pleaded for, and serious godliness and devotion looked on with contempt; and thus the heart is impreguably fortified for satan against Christ and his gospel, *wrath is treasured up against the day of wrath*, and those who might have been the blessing, prove the plague of their age; which is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation to all that wish well to the souls of men, and to those especially who are desirous of the welfare of the rising generation.

4. Let us take heed that none of us do at any time, directly or indirectly, speak against the ways of religion and godliness, or be in a confederacy with those that do so. Take heed of embracing any notions which secretly tend to derogate from the authority of the holy scriptures, or to diminish the honour of religion in the soul, or of accustoming yourselves to such expressions as treat not sacred things with that awful regard which is due to them. Those were never reckoned wise men that would rather lose a friend than a jest; much less are they to be accounted so, that will rather lose the favour of their God. Those that in their common converse make themselves merry with serious things, how can it be expected they should at any time be serious in them, or experience the influence and comfort of them? It is not likely that those who make the word of God the subject of their jests, should ever make it the guide of their way, or find it the spring of their joys. Let us not chuse to associate with those that have light thoughts of religion, and are ready upon all occasions to speak against it. It is not without good reason, that among the many words with which St. Peter exhorted his new converts, this only is recorded, *Save yourselves from this untoward generation*, Acts 2.

40. Those that listen to the *counsel of the ungodly*, and *stand in the way of sinners*, as willing to walk with them, will come at length (if Almighty Grace prevent not) to *sit in the seat of the scornful*. Let us therefore abide by that which *Job* and *Eliphaz*, even in the heat of dispute, were agreed on, that *the counsel of the wicked shall be far from us*, *Job* 21. 16. 22. 18. It is dangerous making friendship with those that have an enmity to serious godliness, lest we learn their way, and get a snare to our souls.— There are two common pretences, and seemingly plausible ones, under which those that speak against religion shelter themselves; but they are neither of them justifiable.

(1.) They pretend that it is only for argument sake that they object against religion, and (so little esteem they have of the thing called sincerity) they will not be thought to mean as they say. And are the great principles of religion become such moot-points, such matters of doubtful disputation, that it is indifferent which side of the question a man takes, and upon which he may argue, *pro* or *con*, at his pleasure? That grave and weighty saying of a learned heathen is enough to silence this pretence, *Mala enim & impia consuetudo est, contra Deos disputandi, sive ex animo id sit, sive simulate*, (*Cic. de nat. D. l. 2.*) “It is an ill thing to talk against religion, whether a man means as he saith or no,” or (in the language of our age) whether he speak seriously, or only banter. *Julian* the apostate, when, before he threw off his disguise, he frequently argued against christianity, pretended it was only for disputation sake. But *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*, and whence can such evil things come, but from an evil treasure there?

(2.) They pretend that it is not religion that they ridicule and expose to contempt, but some particular forms and modes of religious worship which they

they do not like. And this is one ill effect of the unhappy divisions among christians, that while one side hath laboured to make the other contemptible, religion in general hath suffered on all sides. To reprove what we think amiss with prudence and meekness, is well; but to reproach and make a jest of that which our fellow-christians look upon as sacred, and make a part of their religion, cannot be to any good purpose at all. To scoff at the mistakes and weaknesses of our brethren, is the way to provoke and harden them, but not to convince and reform them. They who think to justify this way of ridiculing those that differ from them, by the instance of *Elijah's* jeering the priests of *Baal*, perhaps know not what manner of spirit they are of, any more than those disciples did who would have their intemperate heats countenanced by the example of that great prophet.

5. Let us that profess the christian religion be very cautious that we do not give occasion to any to speak against it. If there are those in all places that are industrious to cast reproaches upon religion, then we have need to walk circumspectly, and to look well to our goings, that those who watch for our halting may have no occasion given them to blaspheme. It is certain, that tho' in religion there is nothing which may be justly spoken against; yet among those that profess it, there is too often found that which deserves to be taxed, and which cannot pass without just and severe reflections—*Pudet hæc opprobria nobis*—Are there not those within the pale of the church, through whom the name of God and his doctrine are blasphemed, and by reason of whom the way of truth is evil spoken of? Are there not those who wear Christ's livery, but are a scandal to his family? Spots in the love-feasts, and a standing reproach to that worthy name by which they are called? Now tho' it is certainly very unjust and unfair to impute

impute the faults of professors to the religion they profess, and to reproach christianity because there are those that are called christians who expose themselves to reproach; yet it is, without question, the sin of those who give men occasion to do so. This was the condemnation in *David's* case, and entailed the sword upon his house, tho' the sin was pardoned, that by it he had *given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme*, 2 Sam. 12. 14. Let us therefore double our diligence and care, to give no offence either to Jew or Gentile, that religion, which hath so often been *wounded in the house of her friends*, may never be wounded thro' our sides. —If we enquire (as we are concerned to do) what it is that gives occasion of reflection upon religion, we shall find that the imprudences of those that profess it, give some occasion, but their immoralities much more.

1. The imprudences of christians often turn to the reproach of christianity. There may be such overdoing, even in well-doing, as may prove undoing. When more stress is laid than ought to be upon some instances of religion, to the justling out of others, and the exercises of devotion are either mis-timed, or misplaced, or misproportioned, religion is hereby misrepresented, or looked upon to disadvantage. Rash and indiscreet zeal may give occasion to those who seek occasion to speak against all religious zeal. Therefore *walk in wisdom towards them that are without*, Col. 4. 5. Religion is a most pleasant and amiable thing; let not us, by our indiscretion, make it a task to ourselves, and a terror to others. The more the children of God are children of wisdom, the more they justify it, and its ways. Christian prudence is very much the beauty and strength of christian piety. Tho' it will secure the welfare of our own souls if we walk in our integrity, yet it is necessary, for the preserving of

the credit of our profession, that we *walk in wisdom*; that *wisdom of the prudent* which is to *understand his way*; that *wisdom which is profitable to direct*. And if any man lack this wisdom, let him ask it of God, who gives liberally, and upbraids us not with our folly. Pray with David, Psal. 27. 11. *Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies*, in the Hebrew because of mine observers. Our enemies are our observers, and will be ready to reproach our way, for the sake of the false steps we take in it, and therefore we have need to *ponder the path of our feet*, and let discretion guide and govern our zeal.

2. The immoralities of those who profess christianity turn much more to the reproach of that holy religion. When those that are called christians are griping and covetous, and greedy of the world, when they are false and deceitful, and unjust in their dealings, sour and morose, and unnatural to their relations, turbulent and unquiet in societies, when they are froward and passionate, proud and haughty, hard-hearted and oppressive, loose and intemperate; when they are found guilty of lying and cheating, drunkenness or uncleanness; when it appears that they keep up some secret haunts of sin, under the cloke and covert of a specious profession; when they that profess the christian faith, allow themselves in things that are contrary to the light and law even of natural religion; this is that which opens the mouths of the adversaries to speak reproachfully of that religion, the profession of which is made to consist with such vile practices, which cannot possibly consist with the power of it. This makes people ready to say as that Mahometan prince did, when the christians had broke their league with him, "O Jesus! are these thy christians?" Or, as the complaint was upon another occasion, *Aut hoc non evangelium, aut hi non evangelii*, "Either this is

not gospel, or these are not to be called professors of the gospel." If ministers *give offence in any thing*, not they only, but their *ministry will be blamed*, 2 Cor. 6. 3. Nay, if servants, christians of the lowest rank in life, be unfaithful and disobedient to the government they are under, the *name of God and his doctrine* is likely to be blasphemed, 1 Tim. 6. 1. Let us therefore who profess relation to the eternal God, and dependance upon the blessed Jesus, and a regard to the holy scriptures, as we tender the reputation of our religion, *walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing*. Let us order our conversation so, in every thing, as that we may *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour*, Tit. 2. 10. While we are called by so good a name, let us not dare to do an ill thing. The disciples of Christ are as a *city upon a hill*, and have many eyes upon them, and therefore have need to behave themselves with great caution, and to *abstain from all appearance of evil*. Let us not do any thing that is unjust, or unbecoming us, nor allow ourselves in that which we know the gospel we profess doth by no means allow of, lest we be to answer another day for all the reproach of religion which we have occasioned. How light soever we may make of this now, we shall find that it will greatly enhance the reckoning shortly, when God will assert the honour of his own name, and will be glorified upon those by whom he was not glorified. In consideration of this, let us see to it, that we *have our conversation honest* among the adversaries of our religion, that they who *speak against us as evil-doers*, may by our good works, which they shall behold, be brought to glorify God, and to entertain good thoughts of religion; or at least, that *we may with well-doing put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*, 1 Pet. 2. 12. 15. Our religion, I am sure, is an honour to us; let us not then be a dishonour to it.

6. If there be those every where that speak against religion, let us then, as we have opportunity, be ready to speak for it. Every christian should be both a witness and an advocate for his religion, and the rather because it is so much opposed and contradicted. Next to our care not to be a shame to the gospel, should be our resolution not to be ashamed of the gospel. You are subpoena'd by the King of kings to appear for him in the world; *Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, Isa. 43. 10.* Do not betray this cause then by declining your testimony, how much soever you may be brow-beaten and confronted. Say with a holy boldness as *Elibu, Job 36. 2. Suffer me a little, and I will shew you that I have yet to speak on God's behalf.* You hear what is daringly said against God, how his holy name is trampled upon and abused, his truths contradicted, his word and ordinances villified, and have you never a word to say for him? Is our Lord Jesus appearing for us in heaven, pleading our cause there, pleading it with his own blood, and shall we not be ready to appear for him on earth and plead his cause, tho' it were with the hazard of our blood? As it is then *a time to keep silence*, when we ourselves are spoken against (*I as a deaf man heard not*) so it is then *a time to speak* when God is spoken against, and the honour of our religion lies at stake: at such a time we must take heed, lest by a cowardly silence we wrong so just a cause, as if we were either ashamed or afraid to own it. Wisdom's children should take all occasions to justify wisdom, and vindicate it from the aspersions that are cast upon it. Read the doom of him that is *ashamed of Christ and of his words in this adulterous generation, Mark 8. 38. Of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father.* Not confessing Christ, when we are called to it, is in effect *denying him*, and dis-
owning

owning relation to him ; and they who do so, except they repent as *Peter* did, will shortly be denied and disowned by him, *2 Tim.* 2. 12. If we should, with an angry countenance at least, *drive away a backbiting tongue* that reproacheth our brother, *Prov.* 25. 23. much more a blasphemous tongue that reproaches our Maker. Should we hear a near relation, or a dear friend (in whose reputation it is natural to us to reckon ourselves sharers) spoken against and slandered, we would readily appear in his vindication ; and have we no resentments of the contempt and contumely cast on religion ? can we sit by contentedly to hear God and Christ, and the scripture and serious godliness reflected on, and have we nothing to say in their behalf ? Common equity obligeth us to be the patrons of a just, but wronged cause. And that we may not think ourselves discharged from this duty, by our inability to defend the truths and ways of God, and so make our ignorance and unskilfulness in the word of righteousness an excuse for our cowardice and want of zeal, we ought to take pains to furnish ourselves with a clear and distinct knowledge of the *certainty of those things wherein we have been instructed*, *Luke* 1. 4. We must labour to understand not only the truths and principles, but the grounds and evidences of our religion, that we may be able to *give an answer* (*ἀπολογία*, an *apology*) *to every man that asks us a reason of the hope that is in us*. How industrious are the prophane wits of the age to find out something to say against religion ! and should not that quicken us to provide ourselves with the *armour of righteousness both on the right hand and on the left*, aiming at the *riches of the full assurance of understanding* ? And if we do (as there is occasion) with humility and sincerity, and from a principle of zeal for God and his honour, appear in defence of religion and its injured cause, we may

doubtless take encouragement from that promise, *It shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.* God will own those that own him, and will not fail to furnish his faithful advocates with needful instructions, and many times *ordains such strength out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, as strangely stills the enemy and avenger.*

Lastly, Let none of us ever think the worse of the way of religion and godliness for its being every where spoken against, nor be frightened hereby from walking in it. The contempt cast on the practice of piety is with many an invincible objection against it; their good impressions, good purposes, and good overtures are hereby crushed and brought to nothing: They have that within them which tells them, that the way of sobriety and serious godliness is a very good way, and they sometimes hear that word behind them, saying, *This is the way, walk ye in it*; but they have those about them that tell them otherwise, and thus the convictions of conscience are over-ruled and baffled by the censures and reproaches of men, whose praise they covet more than the praise of God.—But to take off the force of this objection, let us consider these four things.

1.) Who they are that speak against religion: not only men that shall die, whose thoughts will shortly perish with them; not only fallible men, whose judgment is by no means decisive; but for the most part ill men, men of unsettled heads, debauched consciences, and profligate lives. The scoffers of the last days are men that *walk after their own lusts*, whose carnal interest retains them on that side. *David* was abused by *the abjects*, Psal. 35. 15. and the christians at *Thessalonica*, by *certain lewd fellows of the baser sort*, Acts 17. 5. Such as these are the men that *make a mock at religion*; and shall we be influenced in the concerns of our immortal

mortal souls by such as these? Shall the cavils and vain scoffs of those, who know not what it is to be serious, carry the day against the deliberate sentiments of all wise and good men, who have with one consent subscribed to the equity and goodness of religion's ways?

2.) Consider how trifling and frivolous that is which is commonly said against religion. The devil made his first fatal assault upon mankind by lyes and slanders, suggesting hard thoughts of God, and promising impunity in sin; and by the same wretched methods he still supports his interest in the world. They that speak against religion, *make lyes their refuge, and under falsehood they hide themselves.* All those bold and daring things which are spoken against religion, are either groundless calumnies, or very unfair representations. Hence the enemies of religion are said to be *absurd and unreasonable men*, 2 Theff. 3. 2. Men who, while they cry up the oracles of reason, rebel against all the light and laws of it. Put all that together which is spoken against godliness, and weigh it in the balances of right reason, and you will write *tekel* upon it, *weighed in the balances, and found wanting.* And, as if an over-ruling Providence had forced the scoffers of these last days to confess their own infatuation, some of those that have been most sharp in their invectives against religion, have been no less free in their satyrs against reason itself, as if they were resolved to answer the character of *Solomon's fool*, whose wisdom fails him so far, that *he saith to every one that he is a fool.*

3.) Consider how much is to be said for religion. Religion hath reason on its side; its cause is a good cause, it is the right way, whoever speaks against it. "It is no disparagement (as *Tillotson's* excellent pen expresseth it) "to be laughed at, but to "deserve to be so." You have heard religion reproached, but did you ever find that it deserved to

be so? Nay, on the contrary, have you not found that it very well deserves your best affections and services? Enquire of those that have made trial of it, consult the experiences of others: *ask thy Father, and he will shew thee; thine elders, and they will tell thee, that the fear of the Lord that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding.* They will tell thee, That religion's ways are *ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace*: that all the wealth and pleasure in this world is not worth one hour's communion with God in Jesus Christ. They will tell thee, That there are no truths so certain and weighty as divine truths, and that no statutes are so righteous as the divine law, which is holy, just, and good. They will tell thee, That real holiness is the perfection of the human nature, as well as the participation of the Divine: That a firm belief of the principles of religion is the greatest improvement of our intellectual powers; a strict adherence to its rules our surest guide in all our ways, and a cheerful dependance upon its promises, the fountain of better joys, and the foundation of better hopes than any we can be furnished with in the things of sense and time. They will tell thee, that a life of serious godliness is incomparably the most sublime and honourable, the most sweet and comfortable life a man can live in this world; and that nothing doth more answer the end of our creation, better befriend societies, nor conduce more to our true interest in both worlds, than that holy religion which is every where spoken against.

4.) Consider that the cause of religion, however it be spoken against, will infallibly be the prevailing cause at last. We are sensible of a mighty struggle in the world betwixt the *seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent.* Many there are that speak against religion, and are very vigorous in opposing it, and some, tho' but few, that are speaking

speaking for it, contending for the faith, and striving against sin. Now it is desirable to know which of these contesting interests will be victorious; and we may be assured that the cause of God and religion will certainly carry the day. Contradicted truths will be effectually cleared and vindicated; despised holiness will be honoured; mistakes rectified; reproaches rolled away; and every thing set in a true light. *Then shall ye return and discern between truth and falsehood, right and wrong, which now it is not always easy to do. The day of the Lord is in the valley of decision, Joel 3. 14.* Then will this great cause be decided, which has been so long depending, and a definitive sentence given, from which there will lie no appeal, and against which there will be no exception. *Our God will then come, and will not keep silence.* Whoever now speaks against religion, he will then speak for it, and will undoubtedly be *justified when he speaketh, and clear when he judgeth, Psal. 51. 4.* Particular parties and interests, as such, will wither and come to nothing; but catholic christianity, that is, *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, in expectation of the blessed hope;* this is good, and the goodness of it being founded on the unchangeable will of the Eternal Mind, it is eternally good, and no doubt will be eternally glorious, whatever is said against it. This, this is that *gold and silver, and those precious stones, which will stand the test of the fire that shall try every man's work, and will be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*

Assure yourselves, christians, there is a *day of recompences for the controversy of Sion coming*, and it is at hand; *Behold, the judge standeth before the door.* Then vice and wickedness, which now appear so daring, and threatening, will be effectually and ir-
reco-

recoverably crushed; and such a fatal blow given to the serpent's head, that he shall never hiss, nor spit his venom any more. Then shall *the upright have the dominion*, and all the faithful soldiers of the Lord Jesus shall be called to set their feet upon the necks of principalities and powers. Then atheists and blasphemers, the debauchees and profane scoffers of the age, will have their mouths stopped with an irresistible conviction; will have all their vile calumnies visibly confuted, their hearts filled with unspeakable horror, and their faces with everlasting shame. Their *refuge of lies* will then be swept away, and *rocks and mountains* called upon in vain to shelter them. Then shall the *righteous*, who are now trampled upon and despised, *shine as the sun in the firmament of their Father*. Wisdom and her children shall be first justified, and then glorified, before all the world; and they that thro' grace have *gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image*, shall solace themselves, and praise their Redeemer with everlasting songs of triumph. The dirt that is now unjustly thrown upon them, will not only be wiped off, but will add to their glory, and every reproach for the testimony of Jesus will be a pearl in their crown. With the believing hopes and prospects of that day, let all those who heartily espouse and plead religion's righteous cause, comfort themselves and one another.

S E R M O N X.

On the right Management of Friendly Visits.

ACTS XV. 36.

— *Let us go again, and visit our brethren, in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.*

THIS was a good motion which *Paul* made to *Barnabas*, his brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of *Jesus Christ*; inviting his company and assistance in watering those churches among the Gentiles which they had together lately planted. Blessed *Paul*, that prime minister of state in *Christ's* kingdom, was not only thoroughly furnished for every good word and work, but was always forward to put himself forth to both; not only a chief speaker (Acts 14. 12.) but a chief doer. Many will be content to follow, that do not care to lead in those services that are difficult and hazardous: But those that by the grace of God are spirited *προϊσάδαι*, to go before in good works, (as the word is, *Tit.* 3. 8.) are worthy of double honour: such a one was *Paul*; witness this instance.—Tho' *Paul* and *Barnabas* had an extraordinary call to preach the gospel among the gentiles at first, the holy ghost, by special designation,

signation, separating them to that great work, yet in the prosecution of it, they were not to expect immediate direction from heaven at every turn, but much was left to their own prudence and zeal, that their example might be the more imitable, in after-times: and this particularly of visiting those to whom they had preached.

Antioch was now a safe and quiet harbour, into which, after a troublesome but successful voyage, they were lately retired to refresh themselves a little: There were they easy, and yet not idle; for while they continued there, tho' not many days, they were *teaching and preaching the word of the Lord*, Acts 15. 35. And they had reason to say, It is good to be here. But *Paul's* active spirit could not long be reconciled to rest; and therefore he hath soon thoughts of putting to sea again; he is not unmindful of, nor will he be disobedient to, that heavenly vision which appointed him his work *afar off among the Gentiles*, Acts 22. 21. Among them therefore he is here meditating a second expedition. Against this it was easy to object, as the disciples did against Christ's going into *Judea*, John 11. 9. *Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?* The Gentiles had of late actually stoned *Paul*, ch. 14. 19. and yet, like a stout soldier of Jesus Christ, that he might make full proof of his ministry, he resolves to go thither again.

Those that have obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful, will prefer the service of God and their generation before their own ease and safety; and will consult the honour of Christ, and the good of souls, more than any secular interest or satisfactions of their own. If we would approve ourselves the servants of Christ, we must be willing both to labour for him, and to venture for him; for this is the day of our work and combat: and we must not expect our crown, till our *warfare be accomplished*.

accomplished. Nay, and those who have laboured much, and ventured far, must be willing with *Paul* here to labour more, and venture further; let us go again to do the same work, and encounter the same difficulties: If we would finish our course with joy, we must, like the sun, be constant to it, rejoicing as a strong man to run a race.

What *Paul* here designs is a circular visit; and as one that neither presumed he was himself alone able for the work, nor was ambitious himself alone to receive the honour, he urges *Barnabas* to go along with him, as a sharer in both. Christ sent forth his disciples two and two.—Now observe in this project of *Paul's*,

First, Who they were whom he designed a visit to: *Let us visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord.* Note here,

1. That he called them brethren; not only *the* brethren, but *our* brethren: he means not only the ministers, the *elders they had ordained in every church*, but all the believers. Tho' *Paul* was an eminent apostle, yet he writes himself brother to the least and meanest of the disciples of Christ; thus setting us a copy of humility and condescension, and giving us an example to Christ's rule, *Be not ye called Rabbi, for all ye are brethren.* If our master be not ashamed to call us all brethren, we must not be ashamed to call one another so; not in formality, but in sincerity, and in token of brotherly love.

2. He takes it for granted, they had brethren *in every city* where they had preached the word of the Lord. The gospel, though in every place it met with a fierce opposition from some, yet others gave it a kind reception: Tho' to some it was a savour of death unto death, to others it was a savour of life unto life. In every city where it was preached, there was some good done; some lost sheep brought home. This caused the apostles always to triumph,

umph, that *by them* Christ made manifest the savour of his knowledge in every place, 2 Cor. 2. 15. Even in those cities out of which the apostles were driven in seeming weakness and disgrace, yet they left behind them some lasting trophies of the Redeemer's victories, and seed under the clods, which sprung up and grew by degrees to a plentiful harvest.

They that are acquainted with the true principles and pleasures of the communion of saints, have a tender concern, not only for their brethren in their *own* city, but for their brethren in *every* city; even those whom they never saw, nor are ever likely to see in this world: they love, esteem, pray for, and are one with *all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours*, and have room for them all in their enlarged hearts; and when perhaps not many serious christians fall within the lines of their own communication, (which occasions them some melancholy thoughts,) they comfort themselves with this, that they have brethren in every city; who all belong to that one *city of the living God, the Jerusalem which is above, which is free, and is the mother of us all*.

3. He speaks with a particular concern for their brethren in those cities where they had preached the word of the Lord. Those whom he had preached to, were in a special manner dear to him; dearer than others. To them he had imparted the gospel of Christ, and was ready to *impart, even his own soul also*, 1 Thes. 2. 8. They that truly love Christ and his gospel, cannot but dearly love those to whom they preach Christ and his gospel, especially those who through grace have by their ministry received them. Spiritual fathers naturally care for the state of those who are born again by the word they have preached to them; and it is pity there should be any love lost between them.—These were they whom *Paul* would visit, tho' they lay remote

mote and scattered: He did not think it enough to send some of his attendants to wait upon them, and bring him an account of their state; much less did he summon them to come and attend him with their several reports, but he undertook a perilous and expensive journey to visit them.

Secondly, On what errand he would visit them. Let us see *how they do*, πῶς ἔχουσιν, how it is with them; *quid faciunt*; so some: *Quid facti sunt*, so others; and both from the *Syriac*. It was not merely a compliment that he designed, nor did he take such a journey with a bare *how do ye*? No, he made this visit to his brethren, that he might acquaint himself with their case, and impart unto them such spiritual gifts as were suited to it. He visited them as the physician visits his recovering patient, that he may prescribe what is proper for him, for the perfecting of his cure, and the preventing of a relapse. *Let us see how they do*; that is, Let us see what spirit they are of, and what state they are in.

1. Let us see, what their temper and conversation is; how they stand affected, and how they behave themselves. They received the word of the Lord, which we preached to them, with all readiness of mind; let us go see whether they hold fast that which they received or no, and what is become of the blessedness they then spake of. A good work was begun among them; let us see how it goes on, and what advances are made in the building which we laid the foundation of. They embraced the gospel of Christ, and professed a subjection to it; let us go see whether they stand firm, or are shaken; whether they get ground or lose it, whether they are an ornament to that worthy name by which they are called, or a reproach to it. — This enquiry was the fruit of his godly jealousy over them, which he expresseth in many of his epistles with great tenderness, and true affection:

He

He was afraid concerning those among whom he had laboured, lest he had bestowed upon them labour in vain. See 2 Cor. 11. 2, 3. *I fear lest your minds should be corrupted; 1 Theff. 3. 5. lest by some means the tempter have tempted you.* From this jealousy proceeded a diligent endeavour to reduce them if he found them straying, to confirm them if he found them wavering, and to comfort them if he found them steadfast.

2. Let us see what condition they are in, and what their present circumstances are; whether the churches have rest and liberty, and their door of opportunity be open, or whether they are not in trouble and distress, scattered and broken up. When they had last taken leave of them, they gave them notice of approaching trouble, *ch. 14. 22. that thro' much tribulation they must enter into the kingdom of God.* Now, saith he, Let us go see whether the clouds which were then gathering be dispersed? and whether the wrath of their enemies be cooled and restrained? Come, let us go see how it is with them, that we may be some way helpful to them; that we may rejoice with them if they rejoice, and caution them against security; that we may mourn with them if they mourn, and comfort them under the cross.—Now this visit here designed may be considered two ways; either as an apostolical visit to the churches, or,—as a friendly visit to their friends.

First, This visit was an apostolical visit to the churches; those particularly to whom they themselves had preached the word of the Lord; *not building upon another man's foundation,* as Paul speaks, *Rom. 15. 20.* but cultivating their own husbandry. Whence we may observe,

That it is needful to enquire into the spiritual state of those, to whom the word of the Lord is preached.

Every

Every man is most concerned to enquire into the state of his own soul, while he sits under the ministry of the gospel. It is the work and office of conscience to visit the soul with this interrogatory, and to give in a true answer to it. O that I could prevail with you to deal faithfully with yourselves in this matter!

“ So long the word of the Lord hath been preached to me, How do I do with it? It is a word of life; hath it quickened me? Or am not I to this day dead in trespasses and sins? It is light; hath it enlightened me, or am not I still sitting in darkness? What am I the better for all the sermons I have heard? What state am I in? a state of sin, or a state of grace? What frame am I in? Am I habitually serious and heavenly, or vain and worldly? Is my soul in health? Or doth not some spiritual disease hang upon me? What appetite have I to spiritual delights? What digestion of spiritual food? What strength for spiritual labour? How do I breathe in prayer? How do I walk in a religious conversation? Doth my *soul prosper*, as the soul of *Gaius* did, 3 *John* 2? Am I getting nearer to God, and fitter for heaven?” Every one is concerned thus to examine himself.

According as we find the case to be upon enquiry, let us proceed in dealing with ourselves; if we find no improvement by the word, we ought to take the shame of it; if our profiting doth through grace appear, we ought to take the comfort of it.

But every minister is next concerned, to inquire into the state of his own hearers. They that dispense God's word and sacraments should sometimes, with *Paul* and *Barnabas* here, visit those to whom they dispense them, and see how they do; how it is with their souls. Ministers should not think it enough to preach sound doctrine to their congregations in the lump, which is like the shepherd's

turning all his flock together into a good pasture; but they must search the particular sheep, and *seek them out*, as it is expressed, *Ezek. 34. 11.* that they may strengthen the diseased, heal the sick, bind up that which is broken, and bring again that which is driven away, *ver. 4. 16.* As we must look after our prayers to hear what answer God gives to them, (*Hab. 2. 1.*) so we must look after our preaching, to see what success it has among those we preach to, that we may return answer to him that sent us, *2 Sam. 24. 13.* and like the servant that invited the guests, may shew our Lord all these things, *Luke 14. 21.* Blessed *Paul*, that prince and pattern of preachers, taught not only publickly, but from house to house; warning every one night and day with tears, *Acts 20. 20. 31.* exhorting, comforting, and charging every one, as a father doth his children, *1 Thess. 2. 11.* Let us go and do likewise, as those that naturally care for the state of souls.

In the most humble tender and obliging manner that may be, Let us visit our brethren to whom we have preached the word of the Lord, and inquire what improvements they have made in knowledge by the means of knowledge, that where we find them defective, we may instruct them; mistaken, we may rectify their mistakes. Enquire also what progress they make in practical godliness, that what is amiss may be amended, and what is good may be encouraged; that their doubts may be resolved, and they may be helped over their difficulties, and discouragements.

How to adapt the enquiries and counsels to the case of each person visited, young and old, rich and poor, weak and strong, careless and careful, I cannot undertake here to give particular rules; but wisdom is profitable to direct. Many excellent books we are furnished with, both ancient and modern,

learn, for our assistance herein. Mr. *Baxter's Reformed Pastor* *, will either quicken us or shame us. And cause for shame, I doubt, we all have for our woful neglect of this part of our duty. God by his grace revive this good work !

But if ministers have not the opportunity they would have to visit their brethren, it would come all to one if their brethren would sometimes visit them, as their spiritual physicians, to consult them, and converse with them about their spiritual state. If the *priest's lips should keep knowledge*, the people should *seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts*, Mal. 2. 7. The spiritual help thus sought, is likely to be given most cheerfully, and received most thankfully. But

Secondly, This visit may be considered as a friendly visit made to their friends, with a pious design, and to very good purposes. The brethren they speak of were such as they had some knowledge of, and concern for, and whose welfare they were desirous of; Let us go, saith *Paul*, and visit them, thereby to testify the kindness we retain for them, now we are at a distance, and that tho' they are out of sight they are not out of mind; and let us see how they do, that we may sympathize with them according as their condition is, and contribute what we can to their holiness and comfort. — Hence observe, That friendly visits, and kind enquiries into each others state, if they be managed in a right manner, and intended for good purposes, are very commendable.

These visits are of two sorts.

1. There are visits, that are properly called christian visits; I mean, visits of pure charity, designed for the succour, help, and comfort of those that are in sorrow, need, sickness, or any other ad-

* Reprinted, abridged, and methodized by the Editor.

verity. Few consider what stress the scripture lays on this part of our duty. When the apostle undertakes to give a description of religion, and to shew wherein it consists, this is the first thing he describes it by, *Jam. 1. 26. Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father is this*—What? wholly to retire from the world and all communication with it, and to spend the whole time in acts of devotion, in prayer and pious contemplations, or at least to fast twice in the week, and to attend all the public performances of divine service? No; but *to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction*; that by owning them and sympathising with them, we may comfort and encourage them; and by enquiring into their state, may learn which way we may shew them real kindness.

Nor doth this act of charity make a less figure in our Saviour's description of the processes of the judgment-day (*Mat. 25.*) wherein this will be published to the praise, and honour, and glory of the saved remnant: *I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me*; therefore, *Come inherit the kingdom*, as if all the happiness of heaven were not too much to be the return of these visits. Probably *Paul* had an eye of faith to that word of Christ, when upon the mention of the kind visits which *Onesiphorus* had made to him in his bonds at *Rome*, he prayed, *2 Tim. 1. 18. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day*, that day when such visits shall be remembered, and abundantly recompensed, and accounted as visits made to Christ himself.

Among all your visits therefore, I pray, let not these charitable ones be omitted: The poor, the sick, the prisoners, the widows and the fatherless you have always with you; and whenever you will you may thus do them good, *Mark 14. 7.* You do not want objects of this charity, if you do not want a

heart to it. Look after your poor neighbours; visit them, either yourselves or by your servants, and see how they do. Enquire into the necessities of those that are not themselves forward to make them known. Deep poverty, like deep waters, commonly makes the least noise, while counterfeit poverty is clamorous. What our Saviour directs in making feasts (*Luke 14. 12.*) may be applied to the making of visits; visit not thy friends and thy rich neighbours, not them only who will visit thee again, and so a recompence will be made thee; but visit *the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, who cannot recompense thee, and thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.* The liberal should *devise liberal things.* By works of charity we sow upon the best soil, lend out what we have to the best interest, and upon the best securities, and send our effects upon the most advantageous voyages. Contrivances of doing good will turn to a better account at last, than the most celebrated projects of worldly wisdom. God prevents us with the blessings of his goodness, gives before we ask, and is found of those that seek him not; Therefore we must *be merciful, as our Father in heaven is merciful.* We must seek opportunities of doing good, by visiting our poor brethren, and enquiring into their wants. If our proud hearts be sometimes ready to ask, What are such and such poor people, that we should visit and regard them? we may soon answer them with another question, *What is man then that God should visit him?* Man that is a worm, and the Son of Man that is a worm? What are we that he should so visit and regard us who are so mean and vile. If we think much to visit the sick and poor often, and to be liberal to them in our visits, let us remember that God *visits us every morning,* and that his *visitation preserves our spirits,* Job 7. 18. and 10. 12.

2. Our common visits, which we make to our relations, friends and neighbours as such, should be so managed as that they may be truly christian visits. These and the like civil actions of life, as well as natural ones, are in themselves, morally neither good nor evil, but according to the principle we are acted by, and the rule we are governed by in the doing of them. *Whatever we do*, even in our calling and common converse, we must do it *to the glory of God*; and then it is sanctified, it is dignified, holiness to the Lord is written upon it, and it will be fruit abounding to our account. It is a common piece of civility to *bring* our friends *forward on their journey*, and few look further therein than the obliging of their friends, and the diverting of themselves; and yet even this is capable of being done *after a godly sort*; as we find, 3 John 6. *Whom if thou bring forward on their journey, after a godly sort, ἀλλὰς τὸ θεῶς*, (as becomes one that belongs to God to respect those that belong to him likewise) *thou shalt do well*. And without controversy, great is this mystery of godliness, wherein lies much of its life and power, the doing of common actions after a godly sort, with an eye to God's honour as our end, his word as our rule, and his providence as our guide and disposer. Believe it, christians, religion is not a thing to be confined to our churches and closets; no, wherever we are we must have it with us: *Bind it continually upon thine heart, tie it about thy neck: When thou goest, let it lead thee; when thou sleepest, let it keep thee; when thou wakest, let it talk with thee*, Prov 6. 21, 22. Let it sit down with thee at thy table, lie down with thee in thy bed, go out with thee about thy business, come in with thee to thy repose; Let it be at thy right hand in buying and selling, in reading and writing, alone and in company. By this let it appear that religion hath renewed thy heart, let it regulate

regulate thy life; and abide always under the commanding influence of it.

Among other the common actions of life, let this of visiting our friends be done after a godly sort. To assist you herein is what I principally designed in the choice of this text. And I shall offer something both by the way of Caution against those things which corrupt our visits, and turn them into sin; and by way of Direction to those things which will sanctify our visits, and make them turn to very good purpose.

First, Suffer, I beseech you, a word of Caution; and take heed that your visits of your friends, and your enquiries into their state be not so mismanaged, as to turn to some ill purpose. This we must not judge of by the common sentiment or fashion of a vain world; for our Saviour has told us, that there is *that which is highly esteemed among men*, perhaps as a mighty accomplishment, and a piece of good breeding, which yet *is abomination in the sight of God*, Luke 16. 15. Let us therefore have recourse to the law and to the testimony in this case, and take admonition from thence.

1. Let us take heed, that our friendly visits be not mere waste of our precious time. We are intrusted with time as a talent to be traded with for eternity: As we spend our time well or ill, so will our eternity be spent comfortably or miserably. Every good christian will therefore endeavour to approve himself a good husband of his time. It is not only necessary that some part of our time be spent in *actual* preparation for another world, but all our time must be spent with an *habitual* regard to it. Every hour of the hireling's day must be at the dispose of him that hired him into his vineyard: Our time is not our own; we know in whose hand our times are, and must always live *to* him, by whom we always live.

The wisdom which is from above will direct us, what proportion of time is to be allotted to every service, both of our general and particular calling, so as that the several duties we have to perform, and the several enjoyments we have to take the comfort of, may not interfere with or intrench upon one another. *Every thing is beautiful in its season, and to every purpose there is a time, which the wise man's heart discerns.* Now if that time be spent in visits, which should be spent in any needful duties relating to life or godliness, then they are not christian visits. If under colour of visiting our friends, and seeing how they do, we indulge ourselves in sloth, and the neglect of business, we shall give but a bad account of so many of our hours mispent. We may justly say to many, as *Pharaoh* unjustly said to *Moses* and the *Israelites*, *Ye are idle, ye are idle, therefore ye say, Let us go and visit our brethren; nay, perhaps, Let us go and do sacrifice,* *Exod. 5. 17.* Such as these the apostle describes, *1 Tim. 5. 13. who learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house,* under pretence of friendly visits; and not only idle (for few that are idle are *only* idle, usually they have other faults; when they have nothing to do, the devil will find them something to do) they are *tatlers also and busy-bodies*: idle in good, but busy in evil. But what will they do when God riseth up, and shall bring them into judgment, for all their idle visits, and idle frolicks, and *every idle word*?

Learn therefore to adjust and limit the expence of your time, and be not prodigal of such a talent. When you say, you will go and visit a friend, ask, Can I afford time for it? Is there not some greater good to be done at the same time, which cannot so well be deferred till another time? Will not the calling be neglected, or some religious duties be jumbled out by it? And let that be done *first*, which, all things considered, is most *needful*, and *every thing*

thing in its own order. And where a visit which must be made, we fear intrenches too much upon some more necessary business, it will be our wisdom to improve it the more carefully for some very good purpose, that so at least we may effectually save it from being an idle visit.

2. Let us take heed that our friendly visits be not the gratifications of pride and vain curiosity. They that desire to *make a fair shew in the flesh* visit their friends only that they may see and be seen; that they may shew themselves in their best ornaments and accomplishments, and that they may observe what figure other people make, and what they set themselves off by. They go abroad only to learn fashions, and to see how the world goes; like the *Athenians*, who spent their time in nothing else, but either to *tell or hear some new thing*, Acts 17. 21. or like *Dinah*, who went out to see the daughters of the land, Gen. 34. 1. to see how they were dressed, what entertainments they gave, and how they lived; only that she might have something to talk of when she came home, either by way of praise or censure. This was all her business; and the sequel of the story shews, that the journey was not for her honour. Yet it is to be feared many of our visits are made from no better a principle.

Decency indeed is duty: Civil respects must be paid and returned in that which is the current coin of our country. Religion was never intended to destroy good manners, or to make men rude and unfashionable: In matters of common conversation, it is a rule of direction, not a rule of contraries. But in our compliances with the customs and usages of the place we live in, and the persons we converse with, we have need to look well to our spirits, and to keep our hearts with all diligence, lest that which is not only innocent but commendable in itself, arise from a corrupt principle, and so become sin
to

to us. *Hezekiah's* shewing his house and furniture, his armory and jewels to the king of *Babylon's* ambassadors, seemed but a piece of common respect, and what is usually done among friends; and yet, because he did it in the pride of his heart, wrath came upon him, and on *Judah* and *Jerusalem* for it, 2 *Chron.* 32. 25. and it is upon record for warning to all, even to those who have escaped the grosser corruptions that are in the world through lust, to take heed lest foolish pride, that root of bitterness, which bears so much gall and wormwood, make their visits, dress, and compliments, a snare to them. Pride is a subtle sin; a sin that most easily besets us; a sin that is apt to mingle itself with our best actions; and like a *dead fly*, it spoils *much precious ointment*. We have need therefore to keep a jealous eye, and a strict hand upon the motions of our own souls, as in other instances, so in this of making and receiving visits, *lest being lifted up with pride, we fall into the condemnation of the devil..*

If in our common converse we are more solicitous to approve ourselves to men, by appearing gay and agreeable, than to approve ourselves to God, either by doing or getting good, surely we forget that fundamental law of our christianity, *not to live to ourselves, but to him that died for us, and rose again*. That common principle (by which too many govern themselves more than by the principles of religion) "As good be out of the world as out of the fashion," ought to be of no force with them that know they are *called out of the world*, and are not to be *conformed to it*, nor to *walk according to the course of it*. Let us always endeavour, while we accommodate ourselves to the fashions of our country, and of our place in it, yet to be dead to them, and observe them with a holy indifferency, as those that seek a better country, that is, a heavenly, and be-
long

long to that: So we may do what others do, and yet not as the most do it. Let the visits we make daily to our God by prayer, be more our care and delight, than any visits we have to make to our friends.

3. Let us take heed that our friendly visits be not the cover of hypocrisy: That they be not such visits as *David's* enemies made to him, *Psal*, 41. 6. *If he come to see me he speaketh vanity. i. e.* what he saith by way of compassion and condolence is all counterfeit and pretended: *His heart gathereth iniquity to itself, when he goeth abroad he telleth it.* A base practice, and that which all who have any sense of virtue and honour, will cry out shame upon. Next to hypocrisy in religion, nothing is worse than hypocrisy in friendship. It is bad enough if kindness be not designed in our visits, and if we do not truly respect those whom we thus profess a respect for; for *love* ought to be *without dissimulation*, *Rom.* 13. 9. but it is much worse if mischief and unkindness be intended to those whom we pretend to make visits of friendship to; and we go to see them, that we may find some occasion against them, and pick up something to make the matter of their reproach in the next company. Thus to make the shews and ceremonies of friendship serve the designs of malice and ill-will, is to involve ourselves in a double guilt, both the want of charity, and the want of sincerity.

Not that therefore, when we have conceived a displeasure against any to whom, on the account of relation, communion, neighbourhood, or former acquaintance, we owe respect, we must presently break off all intercourse with them, and deny due civilities to them, for fear of hypocrisy in paying them; no, that is to make ill, worse: But we must mortify that corrupt passion which is working in us; *not let the sun go down upon our wrath*; forgive the injury, whether

ther real or imaginary; be reconciled to our friend, cordially reconciled, and then come and offer our gift to God, and our respects to our friend. We ought carefully to avoid every thing that tends to the alienating of the affections of christians one from another, and the cooling of love; and to devise all means possible for preserving true friendship where it is, and recovering it where it is ready to die.

4. Let us take heed that our friendly visits be not made the opportunities of slandering and tale-bearing. Our rule is, *to speak evil of no man*; not only that evil which is false and altogether groundless; but that which is true, when our speaking of it will do more hurt than good. If we have not wherewithal to speak well of any, we had better say nothing of them: The general law of justice obligeth to *do as we would be done by*. We would not have our own faults and follies, our own miscarriages and mismanagements proclaimed in all companies, and made the subject of discourse and remark; let us then treat other peoples good name with the same tenderness that we expect and desire our own should be treated with. There is also a particular law of charity, which obligeth us to *cover even a multitude of sins*; to keep that secret which is secret, for we need not make scandals, by divulging that which might be concealed: And to speak of that which cannot be hid, as those that *mourn*, and not as those that are *puffed up*; as those that are willing to make the best, and hope the best of every person, and every action, and not as if we were of counsel against the delinquent, and thought ourselves obliged to aggravate the crime, and press for judgment against the criminal.

Nothing is more destructive to love and friendship than tale-bearing is: we have in the scripture, laws against it, *Lev. 19. 16. Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer, among thy people.* The word רכיל here

here and elsewhere used for a tale-bearer, properly signifies a pedlar or petty chapman, that buys goods, (stolen ones it may be) at one place, and sells them at another, taking care to make his own markets of them; so a tale-bearer makes his visits to pick up at one place, and utter at another, that which he thinks will lessen his neighbour's reputation, that he may build his own upon the ruin of it. *Exod. 23. 1. Thou shalt not raise a false report.* The margin reads it, *Thou shalt not receive a false report*; for many times, the receiver in this case is as bad as the thief.—We have also proverbs against it, *Prov. 20. 19. He that goeth about (making visits suppose) as a tale-bearer revealeth secrets*; and *ch. 26. 20, 22. where there is no tale-bearer, the strife ceaseth: the words of a tale-bearer are as wounds.* They that make it their business in their visits to carry peevish ill-natured stories and characters from place to place, to the wounding of their neighbours good name secretly, the propagating of contempts and jealousies, and the sowing of discord, do the devil's work, and serve his interests more than they are aware of. That great and good man *Austin* ordered that law of his house to be written over his table which forbade all tale-bearers any room there*; as a greater than he had done before him, *Psal. 101. 5. Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off*: and I heartily wish that not the persons but the thing might be cut off from all conversation.—You will do me the justice, my brethren, to think that what I say in these cautions is intended not as an accusation of any. I know the faces but of few of you, much less do I know your faults; but as an admonition to you all, to take heed of those sins which I know most easily beset us: for *as in water face answers to face, so doth the heart of man to man.*

* *Quisquis amat dictis absentem rodere famam,
Hanc mensam vetitam noverit esse sibi.*

P A R T II.

Having suggested some cautions with respect to friendly visits, I proceed to add,

Secondly, A word of counsel and direction.

Let us all endeavour that our visits to our friends, and our enquiries into their state, may be made to serve some good purpose: that they may not only be rectified, and made innocent, but sanctified, and made excellent; and may be so managed as to rescue that from being lost time, which we cannot but be sensible hath been too much so, and to make it pass well in our account. Even acts of civility may be so improved as to become acts of piety; and the common salutation of a *How do you*, may by a good intention be advanced to the rank of those good words, which *they that fear the Lord speak often one to another, which the Lord hearkens and hears, and of which he writes a book of remembrance*, Mal. 3. 16. As the sacred words of "God be with you," and "God bless you," when they are used lightly, degenerate into the sin of taking the name of the Lord our God in vain, so this common word, "How do you do?" and "How doth your family?" may be consecrated by a principle of christian friendship, and we may even therein glorify God.

What I am saying of personal visits to our friends, may also be much of it accommodated to paper visits, by letter. The keeping up of our friendly correspondences, which is the chief intention of most of the letters which we write who are not men of business in the world, ought to arise from a good principle, and to be managed by us as becomes christians, that we may not be to answer for waste paper, as well as lost time.—Let us then be governed in this matter by the following directions.

1. Let our friendly visits be the proofs and preservatives of brotherly love. Brotherly love is the law

law of Christ's kingdom, the livery of his family, the great lesson to be learned in his school. Nothing is more the beauty and strength of the christian church, nor a brighter ornament to that holy religion which we profess: It is maintained and kept up by reciprocal kindnesses, and particularly by mutual visits. This therefore we must intend, both in giving and receiving them, and manage them accordingly, to testify our affection to those whom we are obliged by nature, providence, or grace, in a particular manner to respect, and so to *shew the proof of our love*, as the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. 8. 24. and thereby to confirm and improve that *unity wherein brethren ought to dwell together*. We must therefore visit one another, that we may the better love one another, *with a pure heart*, and more *fervently*.

Mutual strangeness and affected distance, is both the effect and the cause of the decay of love. It is an evidence that it is cooled, and it cools it yet more, and perhaps by degrees kills it, and gives Satan room to sow his tares. When relations and neighbours, and those that are under some particular ties of friendship, yet are as shy one of another, and as much on the reserve, as if they never had seen one another before in this world, and never expected to see one another in a better world, it is easy to say, contrary to what was said of the primitive christians, *See how little these people love one another*. But when they visit each other with mutual freeness and openness, embrace each other with a cordial endearedness, and concern themselves for each other with all possible tenderness, by this it will appear that they are *taught of God to love one another*; and hereby the holy fire is kept burning upon the altar.

Now since our lot is cast in those later days wherein it is foretold, that *iniquity should abound, and the love of many wax cold*, those *perilous times* in which

which men shall be *lovers of their own selves only*, it is good service to the publick by all means possible to cultivate true and hearty friendship, and bring it into reputation. Why should we be strange one to another, who hope to be together for ever with the Lord? But if the diseases of selfishness and deceit should prove still obstinate to the methods of cure among most people; yet if we approve ourselves warm and cordial in our love, we shall have the comfort of having done our duty, and delivered our souls: and perhaps they that are more loving than others, will have the further comfort of being better beloved than others; for *he that watereth shall be watered also himself*.

2. Let our friendly visits be the helps and occasions of christian sympathy. Christian sympathy is one branch of christian love. As it is in the natural body, it ought to be in the mystical body, *If one member suffers all the members suffer with it, and if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it*, 1 Cor. 12. 26. What is love but a union of souls, and a twisting of interests? And where these are, there will be sympathy, according to that law of our religion, *Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep*, Rom. 12. 15. — We must therefore visit our friends, and see how they do, that we may rejoice with them in those things which are the matter of their rejoicing: That when we find them and their families in health and peace, their employments successful, their substance increased, their relations agreeable, the vine by the side of the house fruitful, and the olive-plants round about the table green and flourishing, we may be *comforted in their comfort*. God takes pleasure in the prosperity of his servants, and so should we, *Psal. 35. 27*. And we should be the more studious to shew ourselves pleased in the prosperity of our friends, because most *seek their own*, and few

few *another's wealth*; and thence arise envy, and emulation, and mutual jealousies.—We must likewise desire to know the state of our friends, that we may mourn with them for their afflictions, and mingle our tears with theirs: That if the hand of the Lord be gone out against them, and breaches are made on them and their comforts, we may give them some relief, by putting a respect upon them in their sorrows, and assuring them of our continued friendship, then when they are most apt to be discouraged, and to think themselves slighted: Also by giving them an opportunity of making their complaints to such as will hear them, not only with patience, but with tenderness and compassion, and this is some ease to a burdened spirit. And perhaps we may then speak some word in season, which God may bless for the strengthening of the weak hands, and confirming the feeble knees. On this errand *Job's* friends came to visit him, when they heard of all the evil that was come upon him, that they might *mourn with him, and comfort him*, Job 2. 11. and it is some comfort to the mourners, to have their friends mourn with them. Thus *Nehemiah* enquired after the condition of his friends with a tender concern; as appears by his deep resentments of the evil tidings brought him; he *sat down and wept, and mourned certain days*, Neh. 1. 3, 4. Let us learn in this manner to *bear one another's burdens*, by a compassionate sorrow for others griefs; and this suffering at second-hand, will either prevent our own afflictions, or prepare us for them.

3. Let our friendly visits furnish us with matter for prayer and praise. Besides the plain intimation which our master has given us, in teaching us to address ourselves to God as Our Father, we have an express command to pray one for another, *Jam.* 5. 16. which supposeth it our duty likewise to give thanks for one another: for whatever mercy we

pray for, when it is given we ought to return thanks for it. We find *Paul* in most of his epistles, both to churches and particular friends, speaking of the prayers and thanksgivings he offered up to God daily upon their account. And it could not but be an unspeakable comfort to them, to think of the interest they had in the prayers of so great an intercessor as he was. It is written also for our learning, that we may in like manner *give thanks to God* for our friends, *making mention of them always in our prayers*; that thus we may testify our affection to them, and may be really serviceable to their comfort, when perhaps we are not in a capacity of being so any other way; and that we may thus keep up the communion of saints in faith, hope and love.

Now that we may do this the more particularly, and the more sensibly, it is of good use to visit our brethren, and to see how they do; that whatever is the matter of their rejoicing, and ours with them, we may make the matter of our thanksgiving to God: and whatever just complaint they make to us, we may with them spread it before the Lord, and beg relief and comfort for them.—When we visit our friends, we have an opportunity of praying *with them*; and I heartily wish it were more practised, especially by ministers: This would indeed sanctify our visits, and turn them to a very good account. When you are sick and in trouble, you desire us to pray with you; and why should you not desire us to pray with you when you are in health and peace? That your prosperity may be continued and sanctified; and that you may be kept from the snares and temptations of it. Help likewise in returning thanks, is as necessary as help in prayer: And they that know how to value aright the privilege of communion with God, will reckon

reckon this as good an entertainment as they can either give or receive.

But besides the opportunity it gives of praying together, it gives us much assistance in praying for one another when we are alone. When we have seen our friends, and talked with them, or heard from them, we can pray the more affectionately for them. And perhaps we shall find it a furtherance to us in this part of our work, if we would make it a rule to ourselves that those friends whom in the day we have visited, or have visited us, whom we have written to, or heard from, we will at night in our closets particularly pray for, and give thanks for, as there is occasion. I know not why we may not as well spread the letter of a friend before the Lord, as *Hezekiah* did the letter of an enemy, 2 *Chron.* 32. 20. Some have observed, that they have had most comfort in those relations and friends which they have prayed most for. Or if herein we should be disappointed, as holy *David* was, and those we pray for should prove unkind to us, it will be our satisfaction, as it was his, that our prayers will return into our own bosom, and we ourselves shall have the comfort of them, *Psf.* 35. 13.

It is a pious request which serious christians commonly make one to another, both by word and letter, "Remember me in your prayers;" and it is good to use it, provided it do not degenerate into a formality, and that we request this kindness from a deep sense of our own wants and unworthiness, and a real value both for the duty of prayer in general, and for our friends and their prayers in particular, whom we suppose to have an interest in heaven. And being separated from each other in this scattering world, a world in which we cannot expect to be always together, by those mutual requests for a share in each others prayers,

we make appointments of meeting oft at the same throne of grace, in hopes of meeting shortly at the right hand of the throne of glory to part no more.

4. Let our friendly visits be improved as opportunities of doing good to the souls of our friends. Spiritual charity, though it must begin at home in teaching ourselves and our families, yet it must not end there; we must contribute what we can to the edification of others in knowledge, faith, holiness and joy. This is mutual duty to be studied and done, in giving and receiving visits; that *as iron sharpens iron*, so our pious affections and resolutions may be sharpened by conversation with one another, *Prov. 27. 17.* We are often commanded to exhort one another, admonish one another, teach one another, comfort one another, and stir up one another to that which is good, *Heb. 3. 13. 10. 25. 1 Thess. 5. 11.* And when can this be better done than when we come together, for mutual society?

Much hath been said, and much written, to promote pious discourse among christians, but I fear to little purpose. We have all reason to lament it, that so much *corrupt communication proceeds out of our mouths*, and so little of that *which is good, and to the use of edifying*; which might either manifest grace in him that speaks, or *minister grace to them that hear.* And *shall vain words never have an end?* *Job 16. 3. Shall we reason always with unprofitable talk, and with speeches wherewith we can do no good*, but are in danger of doing hurt? *Job 15. 3.* Shall we never learn the art of introducing and keeping up profitable discourse in our converse with our friends, such as we may hear of with comfort in that day, when *by our words we must be justified, and by our words we must be condemned?* *Mat. 12. 37.* A visit thus improved will be fruit abounding to a good account:

count: What knowest thou, but that thou mayest thus save a soul from death, eternal death? or at least further a soul towards life eternal? Thus we must confess Christ before men, as those that are not ashamed of him or of his words: Reproach for it we must not fear, but say, *If this be to be vile, I will be yet more vile.* Nay, we need not fear it, for perhaps even of them whose reproach we fear, if we manage it with meekness and humility, and without affectation, we may be had in honour. Serious godliness is an awful thing, and will command respect.

We grant that our discourses with our friends, cannot be turned intirely into this channel; allowance must be made for a great deal of common talk, yet even upon that there should appear an air of religion and godliness. Tho' a foreigner may speak *English*, yet ordinarily we can discern by his pronounciation, that he is a foreigner; so, tho' a good christian, who belongs to another world, while he is here cannot avoid speaking much of the things of this world, yet he ought to do it in such a manner as that those he converseth with may take knowledge of him that he hath been with *Jesus*, and may say unto him, *Thou art a christian, and thy speech bewrays thee.*

If it appear that we make conscience of our words, and are afraid of offending with our lips: if in our tongue be the law of kindness: if we always speak of God and his providence, with reverence and a holy awe, like the great Mr. Boyle, (who in discourse was observed never to mention the name of God without a pause, leaving room for a pious thought) If we speak of common things after a godly sort, as those that accustom themselves to the *language of Canaan*, and not the language of *Ashdod*; God will hereby be honoured, our profession will be beautified, those we con-

verse with will be edified, and say that God is with us of a truth. Our speech, tho' it be not always *of grace*, should be always *with grace*, seasoned with it as *with salt*, which giveth it its own relish and favour.

5. Let our friendly visits be improved as opportunities of getting good to our own souls. By doing good, we do indeed get good; our own lamp will burn the brighter for its lighting others: But those who are not in a capacity of doing much good in conversation, and can say little to edify others, may yet hear that which will edify themselves. They that cannot be teachers, must be glad to be learners, and should visit those that are knowing and gracious with this design, that they may improve themselves in knowledge and grace by converse with them, and that by walking with wise men, they may be wise. When *Paul* designed a visit to his friends at *Rome*, he aimed both at their spiritual benefit, and at his own, *Rom. 1. 11, 12.* *I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift—and, that I may be comforted together with you.*

What we hear from our friends whom we visit, that is instructive, and what we see in them that is exemplary and praise-worthy, we should take notice of and treasure up, that it may be ready for our use when there is occasion. By conversing with those that are wise and good, we should strive to be made wiser and better. Some rules either of prudence, or piety, or both, we should gather up for our own use out of every visit, that in every thing we may order our conversation aright. As vain people make visits chiefly to see fashions, so serious people should make visits chiefly to learn wisdom. *A wise man will thus hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will by this means attain to wise counsels, Prov. 1. 5.*

Nay,

Nay, even from what we hear and see, which is foolish and blame-worthy, we may learn that which will be profitable to us. Solomon received instruction, even from the field of the slothful, and the vineyard of the man void of understanding. What we observe indecent in others, we must learn to avoid; and take warning by others harms. Thus out of the eater may come forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness.

I conclude, with a word or two of exhortation upon the whole matter.

1. Let us all remember our faults this day, and be humbled before God for the guilt we have contracted by our mismanaged visits to our friends. In our common converse, as well as in our common business, it is hard to keep ourselves unspotted. Think, how much time we have lost in needless and unprofitable visits, which might have been better bestowed, and cannot now be recalled! What mean and low ends we have proposed to ourselves in making our visits, and how we have in them walked after the course of a vain and foolish world, and not after the conduct of the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. *Are we not carnal, and do we not walk as men?* as the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. 3. 3. far short of the spirit of christianity, that high and holy calling wherewith we are called.

Think, How little good we have done in the visits we have made and received! How few have been the better for us: it is well if many have not been the worse for us, and for our corrupt communication. When the company has fallen into vain discourse, that *foolish talking and jesting* which the word of God expressly condemns, Eph. 5. 4. have we not been as forward as any to promote it and keep it up, and shewed ourselves well pleased with it? Have we not provoked one ano-

ther's lusts and passions, instead of *provoking one another to love and to good works*? Have we not given offence, and *put an occasion of stumbling in our brother's way*, by taking too great a liberty of speech in our converse with our friends, encouraging the hearts of the licentious in their looseness, and grieving the hearts of those that are serious themselves, and expect we should be so too? Let us for these things judge ourselves this day, that we may not be judged of the Lord.

2. Let us be so wise as to chuse those for our intimate friends, who will concur with us in a serious endeavour to get this matter mended. The truth is, in this as in a trade, we have the making but of one side of the bargain; we can do but little towards the rectifying of what is ordinarily amiss in conversation, and the improving of it to some good purposes, unless those we converse with will do their part. We should therefore desire to associate ourselves with those who will edify us and be edified by us, whom we may either do good to, or get good by, or both.

It is our wisdom to avoid that company which we find corrupts our minds, and makes them vain, and indisposeth them for serious exercises. What good there is in us is apt enough to dwindle and decay of itself, we need not the help of others to quench it. Therefore take *Solomon's counsel*, and *Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge*, Prov. 14. 7.

But since the communion of saints is intended to be the furtherance of our holiness and comfort, and the earnest of our future bliss, and we are taught by the pattern of that truly primitive church (*Acts* 2. 42.) to *continue stedfast*, not only *in the apostles doctrine*, but *in fellowship*, let us acquaint ourselves with some that appear to be serious christians, without distinction of parties, and

converse with them. Let such only be our bosom-friends: and let us say to them, as the neighbouring nations did to God's *Israel*, Zech. 8. 23. *We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.* Let God's people be our people, and *David's* resolution ours, *Psal.* 119. 63. *I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.*

3. Let us all resolve, by the grace of God, to look well to ourselves, and to the frame of our own spirits, in giving and receiving visits. If we cannot reform the world, yet I hope we may reform our own hearts and lives, and every man prove his own work, so shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, tho' perhaps not in another; so shall his praise be of God, tho' perhaps not of men.

Christians, I am not persuading you to any thing that is rude or morose, or looks like an affectation of singularity: nor am I declaiming against the innocent diversions and entertainments of conversation, which make it pleasant to yourselves and your friends, and are a relief to the fatigue of business: but I am only to remind you, that you be very careful not to lose your religion in them. Remember, you are christians, and you must speak and act in every thing *as becometh saints*, Eph. 5. 3. Remember, you are hastening into eternity, the days of your probation will very shortly be numbered and finished; you are therefore concerned to spend your time on earth as those that are candidates and probationers for heaven, so that you may not seem to come short. Converse with this world of sense, as those that know you must shortly remove to the world of spirits; and let this thought give a check to every thing that is vain and frothy, and put you upon considering,

ing, seeing you look for such things, *What manner of persons you ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness*, 2 Pet. 3. 11.

Lay before you, my brethren, the example of the Lord Jesus, and as he was, so let us be in this world; walking as he walked, as in other things so in this: Let us make visits as he did, with a design to do good, according as the sphere of our activity is. His lips dropt as a honeycomb, and fed many; let ours do so too, as we are able. Wherever he was, still he was about his Father's business; and let us, tho' unworthy of such an honour, still endeavour to be so employed. When he visited his friends, he sympathised with them in their griefs, comforted them under their afflictions, reprov'd them for what was amiss, and entertained them with edifying and instructive discourse, taking rise for it usually, by an admirable yet imitable art, from common occurrences; and these things are written for our learning: Go thou and do likewise.

And that we may be thoroughly furnished, like the good householder, that brings out of his treasury things new and old, let us daily pray to God for that *wisdom of the prudent*, which is to understand his way in every thing. There is no one grace we are more particularly directed and encouraged to pray for than this; *Jam. 1. 5. If any man lack wisdom* (and which of us is there that doth not) *let him ask it of God, who gives liberally, and upbraids us not* with our former follies, our present necessity, or the frequency of our addresses and applications to him. *Solomon*, who in his youth made wisdom his choice, wisdom his request, had that granted him, and abundance of other good things added thereto. In putting up this petition, let us therefore be not only constant and earnest, but
very

very particular: " Lord, give me wisdom to direct
 " me in such a case that is difficult and doubt-
 " ful! Lord, enable me to behave myself wisely
 " in a perfect way towards my family, and my
 " friends and neighbours whom I visit, and to
 " walk in wisdom also towards them that are with-
 " out, that my profession of religion and relation
 " to Christ, may never suffer damage or reproach
 " through any imprudence or indiscretion of mine
 " in any visit, given or received."

And lest this wisdom should degenerate into that which is worldly, and err by an excess of caution, let us pray to God for a spirit of holy boldness and courage also, that we may be enabled to appear and act for God and godliness in all companies, and upon all occasions, with that pious zeal which becomes the good foldiers of Jesus Christ, that all we converse with may see, that we serve a master whom we are neither ashamed nor afraid to own; and that we have ventured all our credit with men, upon the security of that promise of God, *Them that honour me I will honour.*

S E R M O N XI.

Disputes reviewed.

MARK IX. 33.

— *What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?*

OUR Lord Jesus is here calling his disciples to an account about a warm debate they happened to have among themselves, as they travelled along, upon a question often started, but not yet determined, *Which of them should be the greatest?* They thought no other but that their master should shortly enter upon the possession of a temporal kingdom, and all the pomp and grandeur of it, and that they should be preferred with him; but they could not agree who should be prime minister of state, and have the first post of honour. It is a sad instance of the remainder of corruption in the hearts even of good people; and shews that pride and ambition, are sins that easily beset even Christ's own disciples; which therefore we should all carefully watch and strive against. Probably our Lord Jesus overheard some words that passed in this dispute; for those that are hot upon an argument, are apt to speak louder than becomes them, and when the temper is not kept within due bounds, commonly the voice

voice is not. However, he well knew what they had been talking of, and every word that had been said : and (which was more than any man could know) from what principle it was said, and what more they would have said : for as *there is not a word on our tongue*, so there is not a thought in our heart, tho' newly started, and industriously suppressed, but *he knows it altogether*. He is that essential eternal *Word of God*, who is a *discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*, before whom *all things are naked and open*. Let all the churches take notice of this, that our Lord Jesus not only *knows our works*, but *searcheth the reins and hearts*, Rev. 2. 19. 23.

But tho' Christ knew what his disciples had been talking of, he asked them what it was, because he would know it from them, and would have them confess their fault and folly in it, that from thence he might take occasion to rectify their mistakes, and to instruct and reason them into a better temper.

The text teaches us these four things,

I. That we must all expect to be called to an account by our Lord Jesus.

II. That we must in a particular manner be called to an account about our discourses among ourselves.

III. That among our discourses we shall especially be called to an account about our disputes.

IV. That of all our disputes we shall be most strictly reckoned with for our disputes about pre-
cedency and superiority.

I. We must all expect to be called to an account shortly, by our Lord Jesus, concerning the temper of our minds, and the tenor of our lives, by the way.

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It may be said of us now, that we are *in the way*, following Christ, as his disciples here, in comfort. We are travellers, under the conduct of our Great Master, towards the better country; and here we are upon our trial. This is the state of our probation; and according as our steps are, while we are in the way, our rest will be when we are at our journey's end. It concerns us therefore, what we have to do, to do it *while we are yet in the way*; and to do it with an eye to our end; for observe—There will be a review of what passeth in the way. It will all be called over again; every work and *every word will be brought into judgment*, and weighed in a just balance, and produced in evidence for us or against us. Every thing is now recorded in the book of God's omniscience; and in that day *the books will be opened*, and all will be *judged out of those things which were found written in the books, according to their works*, Rev. 20. 12. It concerns us therefore, whatever we do now, to do it as those that must give account, and to consider how it will look in the review; that we may dread doing that which will make against us then, and may abound in that which will be *fruit abounding to our account*, and which we shall reflect upon with comfort, on the other side the grave.—This account must be given up to our Lord Jesus. We call him master and lord, as these disciples did; to him therefore we are accountable, as scholars and servants, how we spend our time. He is our judge, for he is our law-giver; and to him *the Father has committed all judgment*, particularly that in which he will *judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained*. Christ shall have the honour of it, and let all good christians take the comfort of it, that he who is an advocate for all believers will be their judge; but withal let it oblige us to the
utmost

utmost care and circumspection in our walking. We must therefore *labour to be accepted of the Lord*, and approve ourselves to him in our integrity, *because we shall all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, to give account of every thing done in the body*, 2 Cor. 5. 9. 10. God made the world by his Son, and by him as the fittest person he will judge it.— This is a good reason,

1. Why we should *judge ourselves*, and *prove our own work*, and see that our matters be right and good against that day. Let us examine ourselves concerning our spiritual state, that we may make sure work for our own souls; and often call ourselves to an account concerning the way we are in, and the steps we take in that way, that we may renew our repentance for whatever we find to have been amiss, and make our peace with God in Christ. If we would thus judge ourselves, *we should not be judged of the Lord*, 1 Cor. 11. 28. 31. When we come to our journey's end, it will be asked, How we carried ourselves in the way? Let us therefore carry ourselves accordingly, and *ponder the path of our feet*.

2. It is a good reason why we should *not judge one another*, or be severe in our censures one of another. We thereby invade Christ's throne, for it is his prerogative to call his disciples to an account. Tho' he designed them to be one another's helpers, he never intended they should be one another's judges. We may expect to be judged with severity, if we be severe in judging our brethren, for *the measure we mete will be measured to us*, Mat. 7. 1. Our brethren likewise must be judged by the Lord Jesus, and therefore we must not pretend to judge them: they are *coram non judice*. *Who are we that we should judge another man's servant? to his own master he stands or falls*, and to his

his judgment it is fit we should leave him, *Rom.*
14. 4.

II. Among other things that pass in the way, we must expect to be called to account for what we have talked among ourselves.

We are apt to make a light matter of this; and when we have talked at random, what comes uppermost, without regard to God or man, we think to turn it off with an excuse that it was but talk, and words are but wind: But we wretchedly mistake, and put a cheat upon ourselves, if that be true which our Saviour has told us, (and undoubtedly true it is,) that not only for every profane and wicked word, for every false and spiteful word, but for *every idle word that men speak*, they must *give account in the day of judgment*; and so shall their doom be, for *by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned*, Mat. 12. 36, 37. Christ takes notice of what we say now, and we should think we hear him say to us when we are in conversation, as he did to the two disciples going to *Emmaus*, *What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk and are sad, or as ye sit and are merry?* Are they such as becomes christians? Are you not saying that which must be unsaid again by repentance, or you be undone? As Christ takes notice of it now, so he will call it over again in the day of account.

What we talk among ourselves with the usual freedom of conversation, we do not expect to hear of it again; it is *inter nos*, and therefore we think we may allow ourselves a liberty. But tho' it be talked among ourselves ever so secretly, it cannot escape either the cognizance or the judgment of our Lord Jesus.

I. If we talk any thing that is *good*, among ourselves, *to the use of edifying*, Christ takes notice of that,

that, and we shall hear of it again to our comfort, in that day, when those who thus confess Christ before men shall be owned by him before his Father, and the holy angels. When *they that feared the Lord spake often one to another*, for their mutual encouragement to hold fast their integrity in a time of general apostacy, *the Lord hearkned and heard it*, as one greatly pleased with it, *and a book of remembrance was written before him*, in which were entered all those pious conferences *of them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name*, Mal. 3. 16. and the day will come when this book, among the rest, shall be opened. There is not a good word coming from a good heart, and directed to a good end, but it is *heard in secret*, and *shall be rewarded openly*; tho' perhaps there are those now who ridicule and banter such language. What is spoken for the edification of others, will turn to a good account to ourselves; and it will add to our joy in heaven, to have been any way instrumental to help others thither. Nay, if it should not reach their hearts for whom it is designed, yet the comfort of it will return into our own bosoms; and what was well intended for the honour of Christ, shall not be overlooked in the day of account. This should engage and encourage us to keep up religious discourse. Tho' we may forget it, yet Christ will not forget it, but will place it to account, as an acceptable service done to him.

2. If we talk any thing that *is ill* among ourselves; if any corrupt communication proceeds out of our mouths, Christ observes that too, is displeased with it, and we shall hear of it again; either by the checks of our own consciences, in order to our repentance, or in the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God; when, according even to *Enoch's* prophecy, *Jude* 15. the Lord shall come to reckon with sinners, not only

for all their ungodly deeds, but *for all their hard speeches, spoken against him.* It will be asked sooner or later, What was it that you talked such a time, proudly, vainly, filthily, that foolish talking and jesting which is not becoming? What was it that you talked in such and such company by way of reproach to your neighbour, when you sat deliberately, and magisterially, and spoke against your brother, and slandered those, whose good names you ought to have protected? Or, by way of reflection on your superiors, *reviling the gods, and speaking evil of the rulers of your people?* Let this consideration oblige us all to *take heed to our ways, that we offend not with our tongue, and to keep our mouth as it were with a bridle,* that we may say nothing but what we can bear to be told of again. And we have need to beg of God, that by his grace he would set a watch before the door of our lips; a double watch upon the door of our hearts, out of the abundance of which the mouth speaks, that nothing may proceed from them to his dishonour.

III. As our other discourses among ourselves by the way, so especially our *disputes*, will all be called over again, and we shall be called to an account about them.

What was it that ye disputed among yourselves? What was the subject of the dispute? and how was it managed? Disputing supposeth some variance and strife, and a mutual contradiction and opposition arising from it. Disputing by the way is *falling out by the way*; a thing directly contrary to the charge which *Joseph* (a type of Christ) gave to his brethren, *See that ye fall not out by the way*; and therefore we may expect to be reprov'd for it.

There are indeed disputes that are of use among the disciples of Christ, and which in the review we may reflect upon with comfort. Were ours such

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as these? Did we dispute for the conviction of Atheists and Deists, and other enemies of our holy religion, or for the confirmation of those that were in danger of being drawn away by their delusions? Did we *contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints*, and *with meekness and fear* both instruct others that opposed themselves, and give a reason of our own hope that is in us? Did we fairly and calmly discourse lesser matters in difference between us and our brethren, that we might find out the truth, and have our mistakes rectified; or if we cannot hereby come to be of the same mind, yet we may see that even those we differ from have so much colour of reason on their side, as that they may still differ from us, and yet not forfeit their reputation either for wisdom or honesty? Did we with prudence and mildness *debate our cause with our neighbour himself*, and not *go forth hastily to strive*, Prov. 25. 8, 9. and did we tell him his fault *between us and him alone*, before we told it to the world or the church, in order to a friendly accommodation? Mat. 18. 15. These are disputes which will pass well in the account, when they come to be called over again.—But our disputes are too often such, as that when we come to be asked about them, as the disciples were here, we shall, like them, *hold our peace*, as being ashamed to have them spoken of again, and having nothing to say in our own vindication; And (as the town-clerk of *Ephesus* urged) when we are *called in question for the uproar*, can shew no justifiable cause, whereby we may give an account of it.

Three things may occasion disputes among christians and ministers, neighbours, friends, and relations, which when they come to be reflected upon, will be found greatly culpable, viz. different opinions, separate interests, and clashing humours.

1. Disputes often arise from differences of *opinion*; either in religion and divine things, (about which oftentimes the contests are most violent) or in philosophy, politics, or other parts of learning, or in the conduct of human life. While men differ so much in capacity, temper, genius and education, and different sentiments are received by tradition from our fathers, it cannot be expected that men should all agree in the same notions. The same thing seen with different eyes, and by different lights, may appear to one true and very good, and to another false and very bad, tho' both employ their faculties about it with equal diligence and sincerity. This cannot but give rise to disputes; for we are naturally forward, and sometimes over-forward, to clear ourselves, and convince others; and have such a conceit of our own judgment, as to think that every body ought to be of our mind, and that if they will be ruled by reason, they will be so: *Vain man would be wise*, would be thought to be so, tho' he be *born as the wild asses colt*.—These disputes are often such as we may justly be ashamed of, when we come to look back upon them,

(1.) On account of the matter of them. What was it that we disputed among ourselves? What was it we were so hot and eager about?—Perhaps it was something *above us*; about the nature and attributes, the counsels and decrees of God; the operations of his providence and grace; or the person of the Mediator; those *secret things which belong not to us*, Deut. 29. 29. things which we did not understand, nor could; things which it was presumption for us to dispute about, for the angels with an awful reverence humbly *desire to look into them*, as not pretending to be masters of them: 1 Pet. 1. 12. And the great apostle, who had been in the third heavens, not only owned
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that the words he heard there were unspeakable, but was so much at a loss to express himself concerning the work of redemption, tho' it is in some measure revealed, that despairing to find the bottom, he sits down at the brink, and adores the depth of that mystery : *O the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God !* O what reason have we with *Job* to abhor ourselves, and to repent in dust and ashes, because, like him, in our disputes with our friends, concerning the reasons and methods of God's proceedings, we have *darkned counsel by words without knowledge*, and *have uttered that which we understood not, things too wonderful for us*.—Perhaps it was something *below us*, not worth disputing about, especially with so much warmth and violence. It was a trifle, a mere *strife of words*, a dispute *de lana caprina*, as if the matter were started only for want of something to wrangle about ; so inconsiderable a thing, that which way soever it goes, the costs are much more than the damage. In the reflection we may justly blush to think that we should make so great a noise about nothing.—Perhaps it was something *foreign to us*, that we were no way concerned in ; some matter of politics, it may be, which belongs not to persons of our rank and station. Our Lord Jesus, after his resurrection, twice checked his disciples for a vain curiosity ; once in enquiring concerning one another's affairs ; when *Peter* asked concerning *John*, *What shall this man do ?* Christ answered him, *What is that to thee ? Follow thou me*. And another time in enquiring concerning God's counsels, *It is not for you to know the times or the seasons*.—Perhaps our dispute was about something *indifferent* ; like the controversy among the primitive christians concerning the observing of days, and making a distinction of meats, which the apostle himself doth not think fit to determine, but leaves each side to

practise according as their judgment was, without imposing upon either, since they might be of either mind, and yet be accepted of God; only forbids them to fall out about it, or to despise, or judge one another, *Rom. 14.*

(2.) We may be ashamed of our disputes on account of our management of them. This will be found to have done the chief mischief.

Our master will be displeased with us, if we have been hot and fierce in our disputes, and have mingled our passions and peevish resentments with them; if a point of honour hath governed us more than a point of conscience, and we have contended more for victory and reputation, than for truth and duty; if we have contended about things of small moment, for or against them, and have neglected *the weightier matters* of the law and gospel; if we have spent more of our zeal on matters in difference than they deserve, and have lost the vitals of religion in our heat about circumstantial, and have disputed away our seriousness and devotion, *What then shall we do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall we answer him?* Job 31. 14.

If in our disputes for the truth *we lye against the truth*, and speak deceitfully for God, the good intention will be so far from justifying the lye, that the lye will condemn the good intention, and convict it of hypocrisy; for if the intention were really good, such a practice would be abhorred. If we have the itch of disputing, and a spirit of contradiction, that is certainly one of those foolish hurtful lusts from whence come wars and fightings. If we receive our brethren that are weak to *doubtful disputations*, and love to perplex with objections against what they and we believe, it shews a great contempt both of the truth, and of their souls; it is jesting with both. If we judge and condemn

our brethren who are not in every thing of our mind, and tho' we call ourselves disciples, set up for *many masters*; if we give reproachful language, and call foul names, (which commonly betrays the weakness of the cause, and is ingloriously pressed into the service to make up the deficiency of argument,) we shall have a great deal to answer for, when all our disputes will be called over again by our master.

2. Many disputes arise from separate and interfering interests in this world. Neighbours and relations quarrel about their rights and properties, their estates and trades, their honours, powers and pleasures. *Meum* and *tuum* are the great subject of dispute, and engage people in endless strifes. The first dispute we read of in the primitive church was about a money-matter: The *Grecians* quarrelled with the *Hebrews* because they thought their widows were neglected in the daily ministration, *Acts* 6. 1. Many disputes of this kind happen, which will be enquired into as well as those about differences in opinion; and therefore it concerns us to reflect upon them, that whatever we find to have been amiss in them may be repented of.—Ask then, what was it that you disputed about with such a neighbour, or friend, at such a time? Perhaps you disputed that which you ought to have yielded without dispute: a just debt, or a rightful possession, which you thought to have carried, by dint of opposition, against equity. Perhaps you disputed about something very trivial, and of small value, which was not worth controverting, but which, if the right were indeed on your side, you might have receded from it for peace-sake, without any detriment to yourselves or families. Perhaps the dispute might have been prevented, or when it was begun, might quickly and easily have been accommodated with a little

wisdom and love; as the strife between *Abraham* and *Lot* was soon ended, and the matter compromised by *Abraham's* prudent condescension, *Gen.* 13. 8. 9. A little yielding would pacify great offences, and put an effectual stop to that threatening mischief which sometimes a *little fire kindleth*. —Review your law-suits, and it may be you will find, that how stiff soever you were in the heat of the prosecution of them, your cooler thoughts tell you they were not managed as becomes christians; you did not try to end things, as you ought to have done, in an amicable way. Perhaps they were begun rashly, and in passion, and then no wonder if they be carried on unfairly, and that which was a hasty sudden passion in the beginning of the quarrel, is in danger of ripening into a rooted malice before the end of it; and they who at first pretended that they designed only to *right* themselves, at length, as their resentments have grown more and more keen, are not ashamed to own that they are resolved to *revenge* themselves. These disputes, as they are most common, so they are most scandalous among relations, and those who are under particular obligations to love one another; and whatever it is that keeps brethren from dwelling together in unity, is very provoking to Christ, who hath made brotherly love the livery of his family: and it is very hardly removed; for *a brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city*. *Prov.* 18. 19. witness *Jacob* and *Esau*.

3. Some disputes, and hot ones too, arise merely from passion and clashing humours, where really there is nothing of judgment or interest in the case. Some indulge themselves in a crossness of temper, that makes them continually uneasy to their relations, the nearest, the dearest, and to all about them. They love to thwart and disagree, and to dispute every thing, tho' never so plain,
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or never so trifling. Many make their lives, and the relations wherein they stand, uncomfortable by this, especially when both sides are of such a spirit. One will have their humour and their saying, and the other will have theirs; and so they are perpetually disputing which shall be greatest, and instead of aiming to please, are contriving to displease and contradict one another.—But do such consider that they must give an account to Christ for all these disputes among themselves by the way, that they will all be called over again? How ill doth it become the disciples of the humble Jesus to carry things with a high hand, imperiously and with rigour, towards their inferior relations, not suffering them to speak for themselves, nor willing to hear reason from them! How ill doth it become the worshippers of the God of love to be envious and spiteful and ill-natured, and quarrelsome with all they have any dealings with! The father of the prodigal, when his elder son was out of humour, *angry, and would not come in*, did not chide and threaten him, tho' he well deserved it, but *went out and intreated* him, spoke him fair, and so brought him into good temper again, which is written for our learning, that we may go and do likewise. By the account which the scripture gives of some peevish passionate disputes, it appears that notice is taken of the height to which the ferment of the spirit riseth at such a time. When the men of *Ephraim* quarrelled with *Gideon* upon a point of honour, it is left upon record, *Judg.* 8. 1. that they did *chide with him sharply*, tho' by his exemplary mildness, as well as by his eminent services, he deserved better at their hands. When, in a like case, *Judah* and *Israel* fell out, it is observed, *2 Sam.* 19. 43. that *the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel*. And if it be so indeed, that

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an account is kept of the sharpness of our chiding, and the fierceness of our words, we are concerned by true repentance to judge ourselves for it, that we may not be judged of the Lord.

P A R T II.

Whatever we find has been amiss in our disputes of any kind, let it be amended for the future.

1. As far as we are able to make a judgment, let us see to it that we have truth and right on our side, in all our disputes, and not be confident any further than we see just cause to be so. We must not only never contend for that which we know to be false and wrong, but not for that which is doubtful, or which we do not know to be true and right. Let us never wrong our consciences in any of our contests, nor say we believe that to be true, and therefore dispute for it, which really we do not believe to be so; nor demand that as our own, which we know or have reason to suspect we have no good title to, nor deny that to another which we cannot but think is justly his. And if in the progress of any dispute, it be made to appear to us, at length, that we were mistaken, we must be ready to acknowledge it, thankful to those that have discovered it to us, and not ashamed to let fall the controversy. We have a false notion of honour, if we think this will be any real disparagement to us. Certainly *Paul* shewed more true courage, and merited more praise, when he said, *I can do nothing against the truth*, than *Goliath* did when he defied all the armies of *Israel*.

2. In matters of doubtful disputation, while we are contending for that which we take to be right, let us at the same time think it possible that we may be in the wrong. When we contend for the great principles of religion, in which all
good

good christians are agreed, we need not fear our being in a mistake, they are of undoubted certainty, *we know and are sure that Jesus is the Christ.* But there are many things that are not so clearly revealed, because not of so much moment, in which the truth indeed lies but on one side, and yet wise and good men are not agreed on which side it lies. Here, tho' we both argue and act according to the light that God has given us, yet we must not be over-confident of our own judgment, as if *wisdom must die with us*; others *have understanding as well as we, and are not inferior to us*; nay perhaps they every way excel us, and therefore who can tell but they may be in the right? However, they argue and act according to the light they have, which we ought to pay a deference to, so as not to condemn all those for weak men, or ill men, that are not in every thing of our mind, and will not say as we say. *Job* in dispute is not unwilling to put the case, *Be it indeed that I have erred*, ch. 19. 4.

In matters of fact, on which right depends, it is possible we may be mistaken; *Humanum est errare.* Words may be misunderstood and misapprehended, and the wisest, the most cautious and observing may be guilty of an oversight, and may forget something that would very much alter the case; and therefore it will be no credit to our wisdom and goodness to be too positive, too peremptory, as long as there is a possibility of our being deceived. Never let our assertions go beyond our assurances, nor let us give that as certain and great, which was given us as doubtful and little, but be very wary in what we maintain, not only for our reputation's sake, lest our neighbour *search us and put us to shame*, but for conscience-sake towards God, who *hates a proud look, and a lying tongue*:

tongue: two very ill things that commonly go together, to support one another.

3. Let us keep the full possession and government of our own spirits in all our disputes. Let us carefully suppress all inward tumults, whatever provocation may be given us; and let our minds be calm and sedate, whatever argument we are engaged in. Let no contradiction put us into a heat or disorder; for when passion is up, we are not so capable as we ought to be either to hear reason or to speak it, nor is it likely we should either convince or be convinced of truth and right. Meekness and quietness of spirit do as much befriended a cause, as they are the beauty and ornament of its advocates. If we contend for that which is wrong, the more passionate we are, the greater is the sin of the contention, and the more there is of the image of the devil upon it, who is not only the father of lies and falsehood, but a *red dragon*, and a *roaring lion*. But if we have truth and right on our side, that needs no intemperate heats and passions for the support of it, nor can have any real service done it by them. The cause of heaven can never be pleaded with any credit or success by *a tongue set on fire of hell*. *The wrath of man works not the righteousness of God*. Parties may be served by fury and violence, but the common interests of pure christianity will certainly be prejudiced by it. Christ was fit to teach us, and we are invited to come and *learn of him*; not because in him were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, tho' that is certainly true, but because he is *meek and lowly in heart*, and can have compassion on the ignorant; and herein all that undertake to instruct others, must study to imitate him. And this is the likeliest way to gain our point, if indeed we be in the right: for *the words*

words of the wise are heard in quiet, more than the cry of him that rules among fools, Eccl. 9. 18.

4. Let us never lose the charity we ought to have for our brethren in our disputes of any kind, nor violate the sacred laws of it. Our Lord Jesus foresaw and foretold that the preaching of his gospel would occasion much division, that it would set men at variance, and be the subject of much dispute; and therefore he thought it very requisite to bind the command of mutual love so much the more strongly upon his followers, because there was danger lest that should be lost in these disputes. He makes it one of the fundamental laws of his kingdom, the *new commandment*, that we *love one another*; and the livery of his family, by which *all men might know* who are *his disciples*. Let us therefore in all our disputes keep ourselves under the commanding influence of holy love; for that victory is dearly purchased, that is got at the expence of christian charity. Let us *honour all men*, and not trample upon any, nor set those among *the dogs of our flock*, whom for ought we know Christ hath set with the lambs of his. Let us never bring *a railing accusation* against any. *Michael* the arch-angel, tho' he was sure in the dispute he had right on his side, and the glory of God was nearly concerned, and it was with the devil that he contended, yet he would not thus attack his adversary. *Jude 9.* The scourge of the tongue hath driven more out of the temple, than ever it drove into it. Let us always put the best construction on mens words and actions that they will bear, not *digging up mischief*, as evil men do, nor *rejoicing in iniquity*, but *rejoicing in the truth*, hoping the best as far as we can. Let us not aggravate matters in variance, nor by strained inuendoes and misrepresentations make either side worse than it is; for that is a method which may
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harden one side, but can never convince the other, nor can be used with any other design but to make the contending parties hate one another: and whose kingdom that promotes it is easy to say: not Christ's I am sure. Let us not judge of mens spiritual and eternal state, and send men to hell presently as reprobates, because they are not in every thing of our mind, or cannot fall in with our measures. They that so usurp a divine prerogative, take the keys of hell and death out of the hands of Christ, and shew themselves to be as destitute of the fear of God, as they are of love to their neighbour.

5. Let us often think of the account we must shortly give to our Great Master of all our disputes with our fellow-servants by the way. Let us consider how our disputes will look in that day, and what our own reflections will be then upon them. When the apostle asks, *1 Cor. 1. 20. Where is the disputer of this world?* Perhaps (saith the excellent archbishop Tillotson) he intends to insinuate, "That the wrangling work of disputation hath place only in this world, and upon this earth, where only there is a dust to be raised; but will have no place in the other, where all things will be clear, and past dispute: And a good man would be loth to be taken out of the world reeking hot from a sharp contention with a perverse adversary, and not a little out of countenance to find himself in this temper translated into the calm and peaceable regions of the blessed, where nothing but perfect charity and good-will reign for ever."

Let our moderation therefore be known unto all men, Phil. 4. 5. Moderation in all disputes, because the Lord is at hand; nor let us grudge one against another, because the Judge standeth before the door: and we may tremble to think what our doom will be,

be, if we be found *smiting our fellow-servants*; and how we shall answer it, if it be proved upon us, who have had so much forgiven us by our master, that for a small matter we have *taken them by the throat*. Seeing we look for a day of account, in which there will be a review of disputes, *let us give diligence*, that we may be *found of Christ in peace*. When *Job* and his friends had maintained a long dispute, in which many hasty peevish words were exchanged, God at length interposed as moderator, and gave judgment upon the debate, that they were all to be blamed, and had taken a great deal of pains, as most disputants do, to make work for repentance; and therefore the contending parties must ask pardon of God and one another, must forgive and forget, and live in love for the future. This is the best end of controversies; happy were it if they were all brought to this issue now: for to this issue all the controversies that are among good men will be brought at last, when they shall meet in the world of everlasting light and love.

IV. Of all disputes Christ will be sure to reckon with his disciples for their disputes about precedency and superiority. That was the dispute here, *Who should be greatest*. Christ doth not determine the matter, as it might justly be expected he should have done, if he had intended that *Peter*, or any other of them, should have a supremacy above the rest; no, he is displeased with them for starting such a question, and disputing about it, because it was an indication that they all aimed at being great in the world, and whenever preferences were to be had, they would quarrel among themselves, which should get the best; notwithstanding the meanness of their first education, when they were bred fishermen, which might have done something to curb their aspiring thoughts; and the
goodness

goodness of their late education, when they were trained up to be apostles, which might have done much more. There are five reasons why this disposition of theirs was very displeasing to our Lord Jesus.

1. Because it came from a mistaken notion of his kingdom, which they had learned at the feet of their scribes, and had not yet unlearned, tho' they had sat so long at Christ's feet; so hard is it to conquer the power of prejudice. The Jews, misunderstanding many of the prophecies of the old testament, which spake of the Messiah and his kingdom, expected him to appear in external pomp and splendor, and to exercise a temporal jurisdiction, to break the *Roman* yoke from off their necks, and give them dominion over the neighbour nations. The disciples had sucked in this notion with their milk, and imagined (as should seem by many instances) that our Lord Jesus, tho' he appeared meanly at first, would soon bring it to this; and that this was the kingdom of heaven, which they were to preach as at hand. This they had an eye to, when they strove who should be the greatest. Now this was a great mistake; and the constant tenor and tendency of Christ's life and doctrine might have convinced them that it was so; that Christ's kingdom was not to be of this world, but was intended to be all spiritual; the laws and powers of it, the rewards and punishments of it all spiritual; the weapons of our warfare not carnal; that the Messiah was to rule by his Spirit in the spirits of men. The design of it was to refine men from the dross of worldliness and sensuality, and to raise them up to a holy, heavenly, spiritual, divine life, and to teach them to look down upon all earthly things with a gracious and generous contempt. Such as this was the constitution and complexion of Christ's kingdom,

kingdom, and therefore it could not but be displeasing to him, for them to doat on earthly greatness.

2. Because it was directly contrary to the two great lessons of his school, and laws of his kingdom, humility and love. It is against the law of humility to covet to be great in this world, and against the law of love to strive who shall be greatest. Had not Christ taught them both these lessons, both by precept and by example? Had he not made it the first condition of discipleship, that *whosoever would come after him must deny themselves*? Doth not the great law of love oblige us *in honour to prefer one another*, and to give place to our brethren? What unapt scholars then were they, who had not learned such plain and needful lessons as these! How well is it for us that we have a kind master, who doth not expel out of his school dull scholars, but gives them his spirit to open their understandings, and bring things to their remembrance!—When we are eager in our pursuits of the world, and aim at great things in it; when we are quarrelsome with our brethren, and carried out into indeencies by our contests and passions, let us think how unbecoming christians this is, how contrary we walk to the laws of that holy religion we profess. And can we glory in the honour of it? Can we with any confidence plead the promises of it, or please ourselves with the privileges of it, or feed ourselves with the hopes of it, when we have so little regard to the precepts of it? Will those be willing to lose their lives for their religion, who cannot deny themselves the gratification of a foolish lust or passion for it?

3. Because it was utterly disagreeable to the example which Jesus Christ himself had set them. The word of command which he gave them, when he called them to be his disciples, was, *Follow me*:

do as you see me do. But when they were disputing who should be greatest, and each setting up a title to worldly pomp and power, they were far from resembling him, who *was among them as one that served, and came not to be ministered unto, but to minister*. The same mind should have been in them, that was in him, who was so great an example of humility and love, condescension and affection, who *emptied himself, and made himself of no reputation*; who not only in the general scheme of his undertaking, but in the particular passages of his life, gave such instances of self-denial, as are justly the wonder of angels; who to teach them this lesson, and oblige them to learn it with this very argument, not long after this, *washed their feet*, and bid them *do as he had done*. Could the followers of such a master contend for precedency, and not blush at the reflection upon their own folly and unworthiness?—Let us shame ourselves out of our pride, and passion, and affectation of worldly honour, and inordinate pursuit of worldly wealth, with this consideration: “Shall I set my heart upon that which my master was dead to, and denied himself in, and for my sake too? Am I not a christian? a follower of Christ! I must then either change my name, or recover a better temper. Ought I not to walk in the same spirit, in the same steps?”

4. Because it would render them very unfit for the services which he had appointed them to. It was very absurd for them to strive who should be greatest, who should live most at ease, and most in state, who should have the most power and the largest command, when they were all to labour and suffer reproach; to live in meanness and poverty, to be loaded with disgrace and ignominy, and *counted as the off-scouring of all things*; nay, to be killed all the day long, and devoted to death, as
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sheep to the slaughter, and ruled with rigour. Such dispositions and expectations as these would be but a bad preparative for sufferings. They that would approve themselves good soldiers of Jesus Christ must *endure hardness*, and not affect greatness. And therefore, tho' this indisposition, and the mistake it was grounded upon, seem by many instances after this to have continued as long as they had Christ's bodily presence with them; yet before they launched out into the deep of their service, they were perfectly cured of it, by the pouring out of the spirit upon them, after which we have them no more dreaming of a temporal kingdom, nor striving who should be greatest; for those whom God designs to employ in any service for him, he will either find them fit, or make them so. *As the day, so shall the strength*, and the spirit be. If we would be ready for all the will of God, and stand compleat in it, so as not to be driven from our work by the difficulties we may meet in it, we must be dead to worldly wealth and grandeur, and live above them, as those that look beyond them.

5. Because it was a corrupt temper that would be more than any thing the bane of the church in after-times: the reproach of its ministry, an obstruction to its enlargement, the disturbance of its peace, and the original of all the breaches that would be made upon its order and unity. Our Saviour foresaw this, and therefore took all occasions to check and repress it in his disciples, for warning to all others; that all who are called by his name, and profess relation to him, may be jealous over themselves with a godly jealousy, and may look diligently lest *this root of bitterness spring up and trouble* both themselves and others, and thereby *many be defiled and disturbed*.—When we see how early *the mystery of iniquity began to work*, in

strifes among ministers, who should be the greatest; in *Diotrephes*, who *loved to have the preheminance*, and in the *Man of sin*, who by degrees, under the influence of this principle, came to usurp an universal headship, and to *exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped*; we see with what good reason Christ so often cautioned his disciples against this, and lament the mischief that is done by it to the church. It must needs be that such offences would come; and we are told of them before, that we may not be stumbled at them; but *wo to those by whom they come*. The prevalency of such a temper as this, as far as it appears, is very threatening. But when the spirit shall be poured out upon us from on high, there shall be no more such disputes as these, and then the wilderness shall become a fruitful field.

Upon the whole matter, therefore, let our strife be, not who shall be greatest, but who shall be best.

1. Let us never strive who shall be greatest in this world; who shall have the best preferment, or make the best figure; but acquiesce in the lot Providence carves out to us. Consider,

(1.) What a despicable thing worldly greatness is to those that have their eye upon another world. All that by faith have seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; and that are acquainted with the grandeur of the upper and better world, have laid up their treasure in it, and set their hearts upon it, and hope shortly to share in the enjoyments of it. What poor things are the pomps and pleasures of this world to them! how easily can they write vanity upon them! for they know better things. What is purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day, to one that is clothed with the robes of righteousness and garments of salvation, and has a continual feast upon the promises of the
new

new covenant? What are titles of honour, or splendid attendance, to one that is *called a friend of God*, and about whom the holy angels encamp? What are the fading withering glories of time, in comparifon with the *far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory that is to be revealed*? Let us be afhamed then to ftrive, or feem to ftrive for that which, if we act as becomes our character, we cannot but look upon with a holy contempt and indifference. Confider,

(2.) What a dangerous thing this worldly greatness is to thofe that have not their eyes upon another world. How apt it is to draw their hearts away from God, and from the confideration and purfuit of a future bleffednefs; to fix them to this world, and make them willing to take up with a portion in it; efpecially what a ftrong temptation it is to break thro' all the fared fences of the divine law to compafs it. The devil would not have tempted Chrift to worfhip him, with a promife of *all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them*, but that he had caught many a one with that bait. As they that *will be rich*, fo they that will be great, and cannot think themfelves happy unlefs they be fo, *fall into temptation, and a fnare, and into many foolifh and hurtful lufes*, 1 Tim. 6. 9. Let us therefore never court our own trouble, nor covet to enter into temptation, as they do, who, when they are as great as God faw fit to make them, yet are ftill aiming to be greater, and ftriving to be greateft,

2. Let all our ftrife be who fhall be beft; who fhall be moft humble, and ftoop loweft for the good of others, and who fhall labour moft for the common welfare. This is a gracious ftrife; a ftrife that will pafs well in our account, when all our difputes will be reviewed. If we will covet, let us *covet earneftly the beft gifts*, covet to be rich in faith,

and rich in good works. If we will be ambitious, let it be the top of our ambition to do good, and therein to be accepted of the Lord. If we will aim to excel, let it be in that which is virtuous and praise-worthy: in a holy zeal for the honour of God, and the advancement of the true interests of Christ's kingdom. Herein let us strive to excel others, and to do more good than they; not that we may have the praise of it, but that God may have the glory; and that we may *provoke others to love and to good works*: not that we may be *many masters*, but that we may make ourselves the *servants of all*. Let us go before in zeal, and yet be willing to come behind in humility and self-denial. Let us do better than others, and yet in love and lowliness of mind *esteem others better than ourselves*. But especially let us strive to excel ourselves. Let it be a constant dispute with our own souls, why we do not lay out ourselves more for God. When we *remember the kindness of our youth*, instead of leaving our first love, let our advanced years contend earnestly to excel our early ones, that our last days may be our best days, and our last works our best works. *Forgetting the things which are behind*, let us still *press forward towards perfection, towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling*, that at length we may have not only an entrance, but an *abundant entrance ministered to us into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*.

S E R M O N XII.

Separation without Rebellion*.

J O S H. XXII. 22, 23.

The Lord God of gods, the Lord God of gods, he knows, and Israel he shall know, if it be in rebellion, or if in transgression against the Lord—That we have built us an altar.

THUS the two tribes and a half begin their solemn reply to the remonstrance of the other tribes, who, with sword in hand, ready to make good their challenge, boldly charged them with a crime no less black and dangerous than apostacy from the truth and worship of the God of *Israel*. Thus the indictment runs, v. 16. that they had rebelled

* This sermon was preached at the opening of the New Meeting-house at *Chester*, Aug. 8, 1700, but was not published till some years after the author's death. Dr. *Watts* wrote a preface to it, dated *London*, Oct. 6, 1725, in which, after a very high encomium on the author, and this discourse, he intimates that "some expressions in it may not gain the entire assent of his present readers." The Doctor, doubtless, referred to what relates to national establishments of religion, in respect to which the sentiments of the generality of Pro-

belled against the Lord, and turned from following him, ver. 18. and these were indeed heinous crimes, and, in the sense of the patriarchal age, *an iniquity to be punished by the judges*, Job 31. 28. thus to have denied the God that is above, if they had been really guilty of it.

But never was there any controversy more innocently begun, more prudently and discreetly managed, nor more happily compromised, and taken up than this was; for whereas in most quarrels there is a fault on both sides, in this there does not appear to be a fault on either side; and whereas the *beginning of strife is as the letting forth of water*, the occasion of much mischief, the beginning of this was an occasion for both sides to give evidences of their zeal for religion and love.

Let us look into the particulars of the story :

1. That which gave rise to the controversy was an altar erected by the two tribes over against the land of *Canaan* in the borders of *Jordan*, *a great altar to see to*, ver 10. and this done without any leave asked, or warrant obtained from *Joshua* or *Eleazar*; without any notice given to, or consultation had with their brethren of the other tribes; yet being done with an honest design to preserve the intail of religion to their posterity, and to be a token of their communion with the altar of the Lord at *Shiloh*, was not only warrantable, but commendable; this they solemnly declare to be the true

testant Dissenters materially differ from our old Presbyterian divines, in so much that they would not consent that even their own mode of worship should be established by the secular power. While the Editor thinks it his duty to avow his difference from the Author in opinion on this point, he at the same time most heartily concurs with him in recommending love and friendship towards our brethren of the establishment, who may be equally conscientious in their conformity.

intent

intent and meaning of their building this altar; that they had no idolatrous, superstitious, or schismatical design in it, but that they intended it for a witness (*in perpetuam rei memoriam*) of their alliance to their brethren, from whom they were divided by the waters of *Jordan*. They did not set it up as a mere stone or rock of division, much less *as a stone of stumbling or rock of offence*, but as a badge of relation, and consequently a *nexus* or bond of union, wisely foreseeing, and providing against so great a mischief, as the alienating of their posterity from the church privileges of the seed of *Israel*; for fear, say they, lest in time to come *your children might speak to our children, saying, What have ye to do with the Lord God of Israel?* ver. 24. the consequences of which, in after and more degenerate ages, might be most fatal.

They who have themselves found how good it is to be near to God, and what an unspeakable pleasure and happiness there is in communion with him, cannot but be concerned to take all possible care, and make all probable provision, that their children after them may not be made to cease from following the Lord, or be looked on as having no part in him. With the human nature, which we transmit to posterity depraved and corrupted, it is very desirable to transmit pure and entire those sovereign remedies which religion has provided for the cure of that hereditary disease: not the narrow and private interests of a party, which in kindness to posterity we should study how to bury in oblivion, but the great and noble principles of Catholic Christianity; these we should desire to entail the knowledge and faith of upon our *seeds seed henceforth and for ever*, *Isaiah 59. 21.* They who rejoice in the light of the Gospel, will desire that it may not die in their hands; and they who find them-

themselves enriched with the true treasure, and know how to value it, cannot but wish it may not be buried in their graves, *Psal.* 22. 30. 102. 28. but well secured to their heirs, that in their tribe, and the families thereof, the name of Christ may *indure for ever, and his throne as the days of old.*

2. The godly jealousy of the other tribes, who suspected their altar to be of dangerous tendency, and to be an ill step towards idolatry or schism, was likewise praise-worthy; and their warm resentments, when they had such a colour of cause for them, were a laudable instance of their pious zeal for the honour of the Lord God of *Israel*. The thing *prima facie* looked bad, and gave ground for suspicion. The law of *Moses* had expressly required them to offer all their sacrifices in the place which the Lord should chuse to put his name there, and not elsewhere under the severe penalty of excision, *Lev.* 17. 8, 9. *Deut.* 12. 5, 6. and it was no strained *innuendo*, or foreign surmise from the building of an altar in the borders of *Jordan*, to infer an intention to offer sacrifice there contrary to the law of God. This they take very heinously, and seem to be touched by it in a very tender part; they reckon the confronting of God's altar an intolerable affront to the government, & *altaria contra altaria* no less dangerous than *imperium in imperio*, and to be animadverted on accordingly.

The God we serve is very jealous in the matters of his worship (which are to him as the apple of his eye) and he expects we should be so too, and afraid of all appearances of evil; yea, and dreading the first step towards apostacy from God, and so cordially espousing his institutions, and the honour and purity of them, as to be jealous of any thing that looks like an encroachment upon them: when the cause is plainly God's, our call to appear in it is clear, and when the thing we do is good,
nothing

nothing better than to be zealously affected in it, *Gal. 4. 18.* When our Lord Jesus had commended the angel of the church of *Ephesus*, particularly for her patience, he adds this further character (which though it seem contrary to it, yet is very consistent with it) that she could not bear them that were evil, *Rev. 2. 2.* It is no part of Christian patience to bear with sin: the meekest man upon earth was more than once angry at sin. The nearer any are to us in relation and neighbourhood, the more jealous we should be of their departure from God, and the more industrious to prevent and reduce them, lest we ourselves or ours should catch the infection. *Jam—tua res agitur paries cum proximus ardet.*

3. The method they took in prosecution of their resentments was regular and exemplary; their zeal in this matter was for the most part guided and governed by the meekness of wisdom. An assembly of the states was called at *Shiloh*, and the report concerning this altar was taken into consideration, the result of which was, that the business should be fairly and impartially examined, and the supposed delinquents heard to speak for themselves; who if they would hear and submit to their reproof, well and good, *they had gained their brethren, Mat. 18. 15, 17.* but if they refused, then, and not till then, it was time to deal with them as heathen men, and devoted *Canaanites*. These tribes of *Israel*, tho' apt to war, yet would not send forth their armies to give them battle, till they had first sent their ambassadors, (and those men of the first rank) to treat of peace, and to enquire into the merits of the cause, *ver. 13, 14.* He to whom all things are naked and bare, would not punish the most notorious criminals, the cry of whose wickedness alarmed heaven itself, but he would first go down and see, *Gen. 18. 21.* It is the advice of the wise

man, and it will be our wisdom in all such cases to take the advice, *Prov. 25. 8, 9. Go not forth hastily to strive, but debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself.* Many an unhappy strife, and all the mischievous consequences of it, would be prevented by an amicable and candid enquiry into the matter of the offence. The reason why we do not love one another as we ought, is because we do not, and will not know one another as we might: the rectifying of mistakes and misunderstandings, and the setting of misconstrued words and actions in a true light, that they may appear as they are meant and not otherwise, would be in many cases an effectual way to accommodate both private and publick quarrels, and bring them to an happy period.

4. The defence which the two tribes made for themselves, to clear and vindicate what they had done, was very ingenuous and fair. Tho' there was somewhat more of warmth in the charge exhibited against them than was needful, and the fault was too much taken for granted; yet they patiently heard them out, and then replied with a great deal of calmness, very fairly stating the case, and shewing the suspiciousness of their brethren to be, (tho' not without a colourable pretence) yet without a just ground, not doubting but they would lay aside their jealousies, and let fall their action, when they understood their honest and sincere intention and design in building this altar.

Lastly, The effect of this was very good and happy; the princes were satisfied, and receded from their charge, and thereby shewed themselves to be under the government of that great law of charity, which teaches us *not to rejoice in iniquity, but to rejoice in the truth*; hereby further mischief was prevented, the peace and honour of their infant state preserved, and God had the glory of all, ver. 33.

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The text begins that defence which had so good and happy a success. It may be of use to us to observe how it was managed, that we may learn in the like cases so to vindicate ourselves, as not to provoke but pacify our brethren. Here is not a word of recrimination, no return of suspicion for suspicion, (tho' nothing is more easy to retort than that); they do not blame their brethren for their rash, and hasty, and uncharitable censures, nor upbraid them with the good services they had done them in helping to put them in possession of their land, nor defy their threatned arms, and bid them do their worst; here is nothing that favours of pride or passion, but all fair and candid: though the periods of their speech are elaborate enough, and the stile proper, yet nothing appears to be so much studied in it, *as the things that make for peace.* — Observe,

I. The manner and form in which the plea is drawn up: it runs both as an *appeal* to God, and an *apology* to their brethren.

1. Here is a solemn appeal made to God concerning that which they had done, repeated to make it the more solemn, *The Lord God of gods, the Lord God of gods, he knows*—That glorious title of God, which speaks him higher than the highest of the angels in heaven, the princes and potentates of the earth, and the imaginary deities of the heathen (for each of these are called gods) is here made use of, to express a holy awe and dread of that God to whom they appeal, upon their own spirits, and to beget the like in the minds of those with whom they speak. The sense had been compleat if they had only said God knows; but then they had not taken the occasion given them to express their high and honourable thoughts of the great *Jehovah*. Let us learn hence to speak of God with reverence, and mention his glorious name with a solemn pause.

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Is it a piece of respect due to earthly princes in addresses made to them, to give them their title of honour; and shall we speak as slightly and carelessly of the King of kings, as if he were not only a man like ourselves, but a common man in our own rank? Is this to fear that glorious and fearful name the Lord our God?

In appeals to heaven it is especially necessary that there be a very awful decorum and solemnity observed, for God is appealed to, not as a common witness, but as a judge, whose tribunal is in the heavens, and by whose definitive sentence all causes must be finally and irreversibly determined; those therefore that appeal to him upon every trivial occasion, and with a slightly superficial *God knows*, while they neither think of God, nor have any regard to his knowledge, profane his name by taking it in vain, and instead of honouring him, put the greatest affront that can be upon him. Appeals thus put into the court above, will not only be *rejected* and thrown out (how just soever the matter may be) as not being put in due form, but *the appellant prosecuted* for a contempt of the court.

This appeal here is a good pattern or precedent in drawing up appeals. *The Lord God of gods, the Lord God of gods, he knows*: he that is the God of gods, even *Jehovah* (so it is placed in the original) is both a rightful and competent judge of all appeals made to him: who should judge and pass sentence but he that is *Jehovah*, the mighty God, even the Lord? for so this same title which is here used is translated, *Psal. 50. 1.* where God is spoken of at large as the sovereign and universal judge. If he be *Jehovah*, he is perfect in knowledge, wisdom and justice, and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth; that it is such as the guilty have reason to *dread*, and the upright reason to *rejoice* in. If he be the God of gods, the mighty
God,

God, his jurisdiction cannot be demurred unto, nor his authority disputed; no further appeals can be made to any higher court, nor can the executions taken out upon his judgments be opposed or resisted: the God of gods is a judge that will not be baffled.

To the tribunal of the mighty God the two tribes here refer the decision of this matter in variance; *if we have done this in rebellion*, and with an ill design, *the Lord God of gods*, he knows it, (for he is acquainted with all the transgressions that are committed against him, even those that are gilded over with the most plausible pretences) and he that looks upon it will require it, will revenge it; but we are sure he knows the contrary, and that however it be interpreted, it is honestly intended. From whence we may observe,

(1.) That in every thing we do in religion it concerns us highly to approve ourselves to God in our integrity, so as to be able with a holy, humble, well grounded confidence to appeal to him concerning it; herein we must *labour*, and this must be the top of our ambition in every service that we may be accepted of the Lord, 2 Cor. 5. 9. doing it as unto the Lord, and not to men, and then it is done heartily, Col. 3. 23. It was the total miscarriage of the Pharisees in their devotions, *and the dead fly that tainted all their precious ointment*, that all their works they did *to be seen of men*, their approbation and applause they coveted, to them they were industrious to approve themselves, and *verily they had their reward*, Mat. 23. 5. 6. 2, 5. In this therefore our righteousness must exceed theirs, or we shall never get to heaven, Mat. v. 20. All our works we must do to be seen of God, setting ourselves in the doing of them before him, having our eye towards him in every performance, diligently observing his will as our rule, and his glory

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as our end, and earnestly desiring and courting his favour and acceptance, as our *felicity, recompence* and *chief good*; accounting that if he be well pleased with us, and say *well done*, we have gained our point, we have all we need, all we would have; if we *have praise of God*, whether we have praise of men or no, we are *happy* and ought to be *easy*. Let us therefore see to it, that in all our exercises of piety and devotion, publick and private, our hearts be upright with God, that we be really as good as we seem to be, because God knows whether we be so or no, and will accept us no further than we are so: That our eye be single, our intentions sincere, and all we do be done from an unbiaſſed principle of regard to God as our ruler and portion, as that which consecrates our ſervices to the Lord, and recommends them, through the mediation of Chriſt, to his acceptance.

(2.) That when at any time we fall under the cenſures of men and their reproaches, who condemn us becauſe they do not know us, it is very comfortable to be able to appeal to a God that knows us, concerning our integrity. When holy *Job* was run down by his friends as an hypocrite, this was his comfort, *Job* 16. 19, 20. *My witneſs is in heaven, and my record is on high: My friends ſcorn me; but mine eye poureth out tears unto God. David* oft found relief by taking the ſame courſe, and appeals from the unjuſt and uncharitable accuſations of his enemies to God's knowledge of his integrity, and is ſo far from dreading and deprecating God's judgment (as every wicked man if he knows himſelf muſt) that he begs it, and refers himſelf to it. *Pſal.* 17. 2. *Let my ſentence come forth from thy preſence: let thine eyes behold the things that are equal.* —26. 1. If God ſay *well done good and faithful ſervant*, the matter is not great who ſays otherwiſe; for ſo ſhall our doom be as God hath decided it,

and not as men give their opinion of it. If therefore he that judgeth us is the Lord, surely it is a very small thing, and not worthy our consideration, or fit to affect us much, especially so as to turn the scale of our resolves, how we are judged of man's judgment, 1 Cor. 4. 3, 4. If men brand our devotion as counterfeit and hypocritical, and put us under the blackest characters, let it not disquiet nor disturb us while we have good hopes thro' grace that God accepts us and our services, as sincere: Let not them therefore that *know righteousness* (that know what will bear them out, and bring them off) *and in whose heart is the law of God*, (and not in their mouths only) *let them not fear the reproach of men, nor be afraid of their revilings, so as thereby to be either diverted from, or discouraged in their duty; for the righteousness that will justify them shall be for ever, and the salvation following it, from generation to generation*, Isa. 51, 7, 8. This will be our rejoicing in the day of evil, even the *testimony of our conscience*, which is God's deputy in the soul, 2 Cor. 1. 12. Let therefore the generation of the upright, when most misrepresented, commit their cause to God. He who *knows their righteousness* will sooner or later *bring it forth as the morning*, and if their integrity be manifest to God, (as undoubtedly it is) it shall in due time also be *manifested in the consciences of men*, 2 Cor. 5. 11.

2. Here is a sober apology presented to their brethren. *Israel he shall know*. We are ready to let *Israel* know; ready to give such an account of our meaning in this attempt as we doubt not will give our brethren other thoughts of us, and it, than they now have: which teaches us this, that tho' the *record on high*, and the *witness in our own bosoms* are principally to be secured for us, yet there is a satisfaction which we owe to our brethren, who doubt concerning the integrity of our actions.

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Tho' our brethren are not our judges, by whose sentence our state is to be determined, yet they are our friends in whose opinions we should desire to stand right. Tho' to be accepted of God is without doubt the chief and most desirable good, yet it is also desirable and well worthy our endeavour, like *Mordecai, Esth. 10. 3. to be accepted of the multitude of our brethren*. If our sincerity be known to God, we should study how to let others know it, and to give evidences of it to those that have their eyes upon us. It is part of the debt we owe to ourselves to preserve our own good name, and part of the debt we owe to our brethren, to value and seek their good will, and as far as we can to rectify their mistakes and prejudices.

We should especially study how to give satisfaction to those, who tho' they misunderstand our words and actions, and judge of us accordingly, yet shew a zeal for the glory of God, as these ten tribes here did. *The reproaches of the fools in Israel* are to be despised; it is no matter what they speak against us, who profanely speak against God; nor should it much affect us if we be made the song of the drunkards; but the deliberate censures of wise and sober men cannot be made so light of. It is a desirable thing to be accepted of those, who we have reason to think are accepted of God; therefore *David prays, Psal. 119. 79. Let those that fear thee turn in unto me*. Tho' we ought not to be ambitious of the applause of any, yet we should wish and endeavour not to lie under the hard thoughts of good men; and for this reason we should be always ready to give an answer to those that ask us *a reason of the hope that is in us*, 1 Pet. 3. 15. and not say, What is that to you? tho' that which satisfies our own consciences may not always be satisfactory to others, nor convince them that we are in the right; yet if it be produced
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with *meekness and fear* as it ought to be, it may perhaps beget a more favourable opinion, and somewhat abate the edge of censure, when it appears that we are not altogether without excuse. Perhaps after the two tribes had so fully vindicated themselves, and what they had done in building this altar, their brethren of the ten tribes, or some of them at least, were not fully convinced of the expediency of it, but were still of the mind that they had better have let it alone, and that it was altogether needless; but however it had this good effect, that it made the matter abundantly better than at first it seemed, and prevented the unhappy rupture that it threatened; and the ten tribes, tho' no great admirers of the contrivance of this altar, yet agreed to be neighbourly and friendly with their brethren, and resolved they would not quarrel about it, nor go up in battle against them.—Observe

II. The matter insisted on in their plea; they plead not guilty to the charge, and tho' the fact was plain enough, yet they deny the fault, and aver that it was *not in rebellion nor in transgression against the Lord*, that they had built them an altar: they humbly desired that it might not be misconstrued as done with any design to infringe the honour, or weaken the true interest of the national establishment (which they express a very tender concern for) but only to preserve and promote the common interests of true religion and godliness among themselves on the other side *Jordan*, in communion with their brethren, and not in any affront or contradiction to them, and therefore not in *rebellion or in transgression against the Lord*. Learn from this, that it highly concerns those who build an altar for themselves to see to it, that they do it not in rebellion or in transgression against the Lord. Building of altars was an ancient

ent act of piety and devotion, *Noah* and *Abraham* were famous for it; but that, as other outward instances of religion, if not done from a right principle, and for a right end, may and will *turn into sin*. We read of *Ephraim* making many altars to sin, *Hos.* 8. 11. The multiplying of his altars was the multiplying of his transgressions, and the righteous God turned it into his punishment, *therefore altars shall be unto him to sin*, i. e. they shall be a continual snare to him: and the connection of the parts of the charge against *Israel*, *Hos.* 8. 14. is very surprising; *Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples*.—Those who build altars, on which to offer in the Eucharist, a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of quick and dead (as the church of *Rome* does) do in effect deny the sufficiency of that one great sacrifice, which Christ offered once for all upon the cross; and by the pretended repetitions of it insinuate that it is of no more force to take away sin than the legal sacrifices which were heretofore offered year by year continually; because these could not make the comers thereunto perfect, and therefore those altars are certainly built in rebellion and transgression against the Lord, *Heb.* 10. 1.—Those that build altars for the maintaining and propagating any heresy, or the promoting and carrying on any design against religion in the power of it, that build altars to support a monopoly of the church, and ingross to themselves its privileges to the exclusion of others, spoil the acceptableness of the altars they build; and it will be construed to be done in transgression against the Lord. If we bestow all our goods in building temples and altars, and have not charity, the reigning love of God and our neighbour in our hearts, all the cost is thrown away, and spent in vain, and we are but as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, *1 Cor.* 13. 3. and shall

shall be dealt with as rebels against the Lord. Let it therefore be our care to do not only that which is good for the matter of it, but to do it *well*, for *then and then only we shall be accepted*, Gen. iv. 7.

You see, my brethren, how the further opening of this would lead me to the vindication of what we have done here, in furnishing ourselves with these conveniencies for our solemn assemblies; but it was not for that purpose that I chose this text, nor shall I enter upon that subject; partly because I bless God I know not of any that exhibit so high a charge against us, as that we have done it in rebellion or in transgression against the Lord, and I am very willing to hope the best concerning our brethrens thoughts of us, and partly because I am resolved industriously to decline every thing that looks like controversy, and I should fear lest our *defence* be construed our *offence*, or at least be interpreted an invitation or persuasion of people to our way, and an attempt to make profelytes to a party, which you know I have always been studious to avoid. It is a string that can scarce be touched so tenderly but it will have a jarring sound, than which nothing is more disagreeable to me. I am sure this is not a time of day for us to pick quarrels, while thro' the clemency of our governors we enjoy great quietness; and we have as little reason to do it in this place as any where, while the prime dignitaries of the established church among us seem to have buried the thoughts of our unhappy differences in such a hearty pious zeal for the reformation of manners, we are very unjust and unwise if we say or do any thing to revive them. Are these thoughts laid to sleep? may they on both sides sleep perpetually! But that which I further intend in the application of what I have opened to the present occasion is from this text and story to borrow some light,

1. For the stating of our case as it truly stands, and giving a just account of what we have here done.

2. For the directing us in the duty of this present day, which I principally aim at.

For the *First*; our building us an altar, besides that which stands upon the foot of the national establishment, (*altare juxta altare*) is a thing which needs explication, for the preventing and rectifying the mistakes of some unthinking people, who are apt to look upon those that go to church, and those that go to meetings, as of two different religions, and the distance between them is widened to a degree equal to that between Papists and Protestants; thanks be to God the matter is not so: let us therefore see how it stands between us and our brethren of the ten tribes.

1. We also are *Israelites* in common, and therefore in communion with those of the national establishment. Are they Christians? so are we; we worship the same God in the same name, and heartily consent with them in all the articles of the ancient creed, holding just the same *form of sound words, and contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints*. We are baptized, and do baptize into the same great and sacred name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as three Persons but one God. We read the same Scriptures, and adhere to them as the standing rule of faith and practice, and make use of them as our *oracle* and *touchstone*. We pretend to no inspiration in our praying and preaching, nor do we set up any light within, in competition *with*, much less in contradiction *to* the written word. We build our hopes of salvation upon the covenant of grace, and the promises of it made to us and to our children, and submit to all Gospel-ordinances, particularly that of the ministry. Whatever the way in which *we worship the*
God

God of our fathers is called and counted, we believe all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets, and the everlasting Gospel, and have hope towards God which they also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust, Acts. 24. 14, 15.

We are far from engrossing religion and the church to ourselves, and those of our own way, or thinking that we are the only elect people of God; from our hearts we abhor and renounce all such narrow principles as are contrary to Catholick Christianity, and undermine and straiten its sure and large foundations. We do hereby solemnly profess, and shall take all occasions to repeat it, that we celebrate our religious assemblies *in communion with all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours*, 1 Cor. 1. 2. We neither say nor do any thing here to the reproach or prejudice of the national establishment; we take not upon us to arraign or censure the constitutions of it, or *to judge or despise* those that adhere to them; but in those few and small things wherein our apprehensions differ (whilst in the most and greatest things of all we cordially agree) we desire faithfully and conscientiously to walk according to the light that God has given us, charitably believing that others do so too, whom we hope to meet *in the general assembly of the first born, tho' now we are divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel*. This profession we make in the sincerity of our hearts, with a resolution, by the grace of God, never to act contrary to it.

And now may we not claim it as our right to be owned and looked upon as members of the catholick church, *tho' a weak and small part of it*, yet a part of it, and I trust not *a corrupt part*; and being united with our brethren of the other tribes, under one civil government, and being (abundantly

dantly to our satisfaction) within the same allegiance, and even in our religious interests taken into the same protection, we see not why we should not be looked upon as belonging to that part of the catholick church *which God's own right hand hath planted in these kingdoms.*

2. Tho' we also are *Israelites*, yet our lot like that of the two tribes happens to fall on the other side *Jordan*, a river dividing between us and our brethren, which, without hazarding the peace of our consciences, we cannot *wade thro' or swim over.*

Some of the tribes of our *English Israel* have been so situated ever since the reformation, as early as *Edward the Sixth's* time, thro' a dissatisfaction about the injunction of some indifferent things, the more minute parts of the national establishment. The first settlement of the two tribes on the other side *Jordan* was looked upon by *Moses* and the rest of the tribes with a jealousy, as tending to weaken the common interests of *Israel*; and their proposing of it (as here their building of an altar) was severely censured, till they had given their reasons, cleared themselves of any ill design in it, and promised their best assistance to their brethren in the common service; and then *Moses* allowed and ratified their choice, as we have the story at large, *Num. 32.* where we find, that two things induced them to desire their lot on that side *Jordan*, tho' thereby they put themselves out of the way of the preferments which attended *Joshua* and the ark into the land of *Canaan*, and exposed themselves to the contempt and censure of their brethren, as strangers to the commonwealth of *Israel*.

(1.) That there was good pasture in the land, *v. 4. it is a land for cattle, and thy servants have cattle: they would sit down by the footsteps of the flock, and feed their kids beside the shepherds tents.*

(2.) That

(2.) That then they should not have the trouble of passing the river, *v. 5. bring us not over Jordan.* Whether these inducements were justifiable we will not now dispute, but it appears that the rest of the tribes, who could satisfy themselves to go thro' *Jordan*, did not therefore disown them for their brethren.

From the first planting of Christianity, there appears to have been a variety of sentiments among wise and good men, concerning the less weighty and less evident matters of the Gospel, as concerning the distinction of meats and the observation of days, *Rom. 14. 2. 5.* some regarding all days and all meats alike, others making a religious difference. The apostle *Paul* by his unquestionable authority might have determined the matter in favour of one side, and have obliged the other to a compliance; but he chooses to accommodate the matter, without engaging either to change their opinions or their practice according to them, but prescribes a mutual charity and forbearance as a sovereign remedy against all the ill consequences of this variety of sentiments, *Phil. 3. 15, 16. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, Rom. 14. 3. but let every man be persuaded in his own mind, v. 5.* which no doubt were intended to be standing rules for the management of the like differences in all the ages of the church; and if these rules were strictly observed by all churches and all christians, the river of *Jordan* would be dried up, at least be driven back at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob, *Psalms 104. 5. 7.* the God of peace and love: and a way would be made for those of the ransomed of the Lord to pass over, whose lot is on the other side of it; but alas who shall live when God does this!

In the mean time for the divisions of *Reuben*, (one of the two tribes that was divided from the
rest

rest by the waters of *Jordan*) there cannot but be great thoughts and searchings of heart, as *Judg.* 5. 15, 16. with all that desire and pray for the peace and prosperity of *Jerusalem*.

3. Being *Israelites*, (tho' on the other side *Jordan*) it ought to be our care and endeavour, according as our lot is, to promote the common interests of our holy religion, and to do what we can to preserve and advance them. *And the Lord God of gods he knows* it is with this design that we have built us an altar; not for the support of a sect or a party, or the carrying on of any private interests, but for the service of Catholick Christianity according to the Scriptures. We know very well *that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink*, *Rom.* 14. 17. that it is not maintained either by the *imposition* or *opposition* of indifferent things, but that it consists in *righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*; these are the things in which lies the being and power of the divine life, and not in a zeal either for or against ceremonies; we know very well that *neither circumcision is any thing, nor uncircumcision any thing* to our acceptance with God, *but the new creature, and faith which works by love.* *Gal.* 5. 6. 15. That therefore which is of uncontroverted necessity, and which is the very life and soul of religion, we would do our endeavour, and make it our business, at this altar, to maintain and carry on, so that we *and our children after us may have a part in the Lord, and may never cease from following him.* We would endeavour to glorify the great name of God in Christ in our prayers and praises, and in concurrence with the universal church, to pay due homage to the universal Lord. We desire and design in the preaching of the word to propagate the knowledge of the *only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, which is life eternal*, to push on the holy war against sin and Satan, the world

world and the flesh, under the banner of the exalted Redeemer. Our intention in all our ministrations, shall be the same with the intentions of the ministry in general, *Acts 26. 18. first to open mens eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God; to recover people from under the dominion of a worldly, carnal, sensual mind, to the faith and obedience of the everlasting gospel; and then for the building up of the saints in holiness and comfort, and the edifying of the body of Christ, till they all come to the perfect man, Eph. 4. 12, 13. And herein we are still determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*

And this we do not in opposition to, but a hearty concurrence with, the national establishment as far as it aims at these ends. *God forbid that we should preach Christ, who is our peace, out of envy or contention; no, we desire to have all our different apprehensions and sentiments swallowed up in a pious zeal for the common faith of the precious Jesus, and the common salvation of precious souls; and in token of this communion with our brethren of the other tribes, we have built us this altar, that we may say as they, v. 28. Behold the pattern of the altar which we have built! not to intail a schism, and to perpetuate a causeless separation, but for the solemnity and decorum of our religious assemblies (until God shall open a door into the national establishment) and the rolling away of their reproach, that it may not be said to us as it was to the Gileadites (the half tribe whose lot was on the other side Jordan) Ye Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim. Judges 12. 4.*

We need not, we cannot, put it into our apology, that we have not built our altar for burnt offerings and sacrifices; for, blessed be God, we are not under the Gospel tied up to worship in one place, *John 4. 21. as the Jews were under the*

the law. *The hour now is when neither to this mountain, nor yet to Jerusalem shall religious worship be confined; but in every place incense shall be offered, and prayers made, Mal. 1. 11. every where without respect of places: 1 Tim. 2. 8. we know no temples, no altar that sanctifies the gift, or the service, but Christ only, Heb. 13. 20.* But this we can say, that we have not built our altar in rebellion, or in transgression against the Lord, or to make a breach upon Catholic unity. Thus I have endeavoured, with the words of truth and soberness, to state our case, and I know I speak the sentiments of many.

P A R T II.

What remains is, *Secondly*, to direct you in the duty of the present day and occasion. And now, my brethren, *what doth the Lord our God require of us?* I take it for granted you are willing to know, and therefore I beseech you suffer the word of exhortation.

1. Let us give God the glory of our peaceable settlement in the land of our possession. We have reason to acknowledge it to a kind providence, that cast our lot in such a land as this, an exceeding good land like that of *Canaan, a pleasant land*, Dan. 8. 9. a glorious land, or land of delights, or ornaments, wherein there is no want of any good thing, nor any reason to envy (all things considered) either the soil or climate of any other land. The constitution of our civil government, and the defences and securities of our liberty and property, are such as make our nation easy, safe and happy. Our lot is also cast in a good day, wherein we have not for many years felt the strokes of any desolating judgments, either war, famine or pestilence. While thus we dwell peaceably

ably under fruitful *vines and fig-trees*, we are much to blame if we praise not the name of the Lord.

The two tribes built this altar here to the glory of God, when they were returning triumphantly to settle in their inheritance, as *David* fetched the ark to the place he had prepared for it, when God *had given him rest from all his enemies round about*, 2 Sam. 7. 1. The *Israelites*, every time they offered their first fruits, were appointed to make a thankful mention of the mercy of God to them, in giving them that good land, Deut. 26. 3. 9, 10. And we have a great deal of reason to do the same, now we are offering the first fruits of our altar. If we consider how melancholy the reverse of our present circumstances would be, we should see what great cause we have to be thankful to God, for our share in the publick peace and plenty. National plenty in the success of trade, and the increase of the earth, contributes to the support and comfort of our religious assemblies; for thus we have wherewithal to honour our God. When famine reigned, *the meat-offering and the drink-offering failed from the house of God*, Joel 1. 13. compare ch. 2. 14. National peace does no less contribute to the comfort of our assemblies, *for in the peace of the nation we have peace*. We have great reason to bless God that our land is not the seat of war, *and that the sword of the Lord is not drawn amongst us*, (as sometimes it has been) *and commissioned to lay heaps upon heaps: that the city, the place of our solemnities, is a quiet habitation*, Isa. 33. 20. It is easy to imagine what desolations war, especially civil war, would make, not only with our cities and houses, but with our temples and altars. (*Inter arma silent leges* & *Evangelium*.) What a mercy is it that we are delivered from *the noise of archers, and all other the alarms of war, at the places of drawing waters!* and there-
fore

fore there ought we to rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord, Judg. 5. 11. We have reason to call the altar we have built as *Moses* called his, *Exod.* 17. 15. (in thankfulness after the discomfiture of *Amalek*,) *Jehovah Nissi*, the Lord my banner, in whom we triumph; and as *Gideon* called his in faith, before the defeat of *Midian*, *Jehovah Shalom*, the Lord our peace, in whom we trust.

2. Let us much more give God praise, for the national establishment of our religion, with that of our peace and civil liberty. That our *Canaan* is not only a land flowing with milk and honey, but (which is a much greater advantage) that it is *Immanuel's land*, *Isa.* 8. 8. that the Christian Religion, that choice and noble vine, which was so early planted in our land, is still growing and flourishing in it, in despite of all the attempts of the powers of darkness to root it out; that it is refined from the errors and corruptions which the Church of *Rome* had (with the help of ignorance and tyranny) introduced, and that the reformation was in our land a national act: that Christianity thus purified, is supported and defended by good and wholesome laws, and is twisted in with the very constitution of our government. It is a maxim in our law books, that the law of God is the law of the land; that the holy Scripture is of sovereign authority; and that if any statute be made directly against the law of God, it is void; and that every thing that is for the support of religion shall be favoured. *Summa ratio est quæ pro religione facit*, and (which I would observe as a justification of the civil punishment of sabbath profanation) it is a constant rule of our law, *Dies dominicus est dies non juridicus*, that the law is so far from countenancing, that it nullifies and invalidates all writs, processes, and judicial acts upon the Lord's day: and if the administration

ministration of right and justice, consents to give way to the solemnity of the Lord's day, shall a common petty trade, or a vain idle sport, intrude or intrench upon these sacred hours, and not be animadverted upon?

The banks and bulwarks which the civil government hath raised, against the threatening force of atheism, deism, prophaneness, and irreligion, on the one hand, and of popery and idolatry on the other hand, tho' they should not make us secure, and, as it were, in no danger from them; yet they should make us thankful, that God has not only set up his tabernacle among us, but hath set such a guard upon it, as we hope will preserve it to the generations to come, that the *English* nation may never be otherwise than a Christian protestant nation. The encouragement which the government gives to religion, is also a great support to it, and ought to be matter of rejoicing to all good men: that the civil powers speak comfortably *to them that teach the good knowledge of the Lord*, 2 Chron. 30. 22. and take the ministry and the administration of ordinances under their protection and patronage. *God has not dealt so with other nations*, with other churches. True Christianity, we may safely say it, has not such a nursing father of any crowned head in the world, as it has in our land. The mercy is more sensibly great, because it is not long since our religion, and all the defences of it, with all its supports, were at the brink of ruin; and like *Isaac* upon the altar, lay ready to be sacrificed to the malice of our popish enemies; and had the ship then sunk, our cabin could not have been preserved. *Deut. 32. 27. But fearing the wrath of the enemy, lest they should behave themselves proudly.* Ezek. 36. 32. *And not for our sakes, be it known unto us*, God sent from heaven to save us, and raise up a deliverer

liverer for us, to whose seasonable and successful application we owe, under God, our present tranquillity. A mercy never to be forgotten, and to which every year's revolution makes a fresh addition! that notwithstanding our manifold provocations, by which we have forfeited our peace under the present government, and the restless and unwearied attempts of our enemies, who have been industrious to overturn it; we are yet in the enjoyment of its benign influences. This ought to be the matter of our wonder and praise. *Surely because the Lord loved us, he hath set a king over us*, and continued him so long, that answers Mordecai's character, *Esth. 10. 3. Seeking the welfare of his people, and speaking peace to all their seed.*

3. Let us acknowledge, with thankfulness to God, the favour which we on this side *Jordan* have found with the princes of our *Israel*; that they are so far satisfied, that the altars we build are not in rebellion, or in transgression against the Lord; that they do not go up to war against us, as these princes here resolved, *v. 33.* We have great reason to bless God for our present liberty, and that we have it confirmed to us by a law, and the wide door of opportunity continues open; God grant it may be effectual. Now for a little space, (nay for a long space, much longer than we would have flattered ourselves with the expectation of) *grace has been shewed us from the Lord our God to leave us a remnant to escape those many dark and cloudy days which past over the heads of our predecessors, and some of ours; and to give us a nail* (a fixing and settlement, and constant abode) *in his holy place: That our God may lighten our eyes, instruct and comfort us, and give us some reviving, Ezra 9. 8.* While we enjoy the comfort of our liberty, we ought to repeat our thanksgivings for the mercy of it; and an invaluable mercy it is, that *there is a*
defence

dependence upon our glory, Isa. 45. 6. and that our religious assemblies are taken under the kind protection and shelter of the government. Would we have this liberty continued? let us be thankful for it, and give diligence to make a good use of it while the gleam lasts. In the receiving of it *we were like them that dream*, Psal. 126. 1. Such was the surprize of it: let it not be said of us, that such is our slothfulness and carelessness, we are like them that dream, in the improvement of it: as the hungry man that dreameth, and behold he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty.

We have reason to be thankful, that the reproach of sedition, and disloyalty, and disaffection to the government, is quite done away from our assemblies; and that there is now no colour for the imputation of that, (which from our hearts we always abhorred,) the disturbance of the publick peace: But that while *we live in godliness and honesty, we may live quiet and peaceable lives, and there is none to make us afraid*. If Ezra were so thankful to God for the countenance of a heathen king, and that *God had put such a thing into the king's heart*, Ezra. 7. 27, 28. much more reason have we to be thankful, for the countenance of a Christian and protestant government; *the good of which we are obliged to seek, because of the house of the Lord our God*, Psal. 122. It adds much to the comfort of our present liberty, that in the ratification of it by a law, it was not intended, (as we have reason to fear it was on the first precarious grant of it) for a trap and a snare, and the serving of a design against our common interests; but for our ease, comfort, and benefit: and that in the preamble of the statute, it is declared to be for no less a publick good, than the uniting of his Majesty's protestant subjects in interest and affection: *This is the Lord's doing*: And as at first the surprize of it made it

marvellous in our eyes; so the continuance of it makes it no less so. The altar we have built, we may call *our Ebenezer*, saying, *hitherto the Lord has helped us*.

4. While we enjoy the liberty of our altars, let us remember and sympathize with our brethren, with whom *it is a day of treading down, and of perplexity*; I mean the poor persecuted protestants in *France*, who are killed all the day long, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter, and whose blood is barbarously mingled with their sacrifices; they are our bone and our flesh, fellow members of the same body, concurring with us in the same testimony against the antichristian generation. But how is a *flourishing church made a wilderness, the gold become dim, the most fine gold changed!* while we meet together in full assemblies, they are scattered. We have decent and convenient places to meet in; but they are driven into woods and wildernesses, and *are counted as the off-scouring of all things*. We are safe in our assemblies, and there is none to make us afraid; but they are exposed to the cruelty of bloody men, and cannot come together to worship God according to their consciences, but in peril of death, or a slavery much worse, and more terrible*: When we consider this, and the sad desolations of the sanctuary in other places, our joy in the altar we have built, admits as great a mixture and alloy, as theirs did who laid the foundation of the temple, *Ezra 3. 13. When the noise of the shouts of joy could not be discerned from the noise of the weeping of the people*. What a damp does this cast upon our comforts, and what a sadness does it put upon our countenances? as it did on *Nebemiah's* to hear that the remnant that were left of the captivity were in such great affliction and reproach, *Neh. 1. 3, 4*.

* The Protestants in *France* now meet with connivance.

Let us therefore, with the greatest tenderness remember them that are in bonds as bound with them; let us feel their burdens; and let not all the trouble they are in seem little to us; let us pity them, and pray for them daily, and by a Christian sympathy suffer with them, as all the members of the body do with a pained one. Let the *truths* they suffer for be *precious* to us; and the *liberty* they long for be *valued* by us. When we begin to *despise the Manna*, and to *call it light bread*, and when *our full souls loath the honey comb*, think what they would give for one of those peaceable opportunities, which we so easily neglect; and how they would welcome those days of the son of man, which we think return too fast. Let their calamities also be warnings to us, to take heed of settling upon our lees, *because we have been at ease from our youth*, Jer. 48.

II. Time was when they were as sure of their peace and liberty, as we can be of ours, and *thought their mountain stood strong, and should not be moved*: But God by his dealings with them, will make all his churches to know, that they have no lease of their privileges, but are tenants at will: that they may give diligence while they have the light, to believe and walk in it, *lest darkness come upon them*. When we begin to grow secure and careless, and to leave our first love, *let us go and see what God did to Shiloh*, Jer. 7. 12. and dread *the removing of our candlestick also*, Rev. 2. 5.

But is their wound incurable? Has God cast them off for ever? We trust not. *The rod of the wicked shall not always rest upon the lot of the righteous*, Psal. 125. 3. *There is a time, a set time to favour Zion*, Psal. 102. 13, 14. which undoubtedly will come: Let us therefore believe and hope, and pray, and wait: *the vision is yet for an appointed time; and at the end it shall speak and not lye*. Did God bring back our captivity, and do such great things for

us, whereof we are glad? Let us be earnest with God, to compleat the mercy of our peace, by working deliverance for them, and *turning their captivity as streams in the south, being assured that they who sow in tears shall reap in joy*, Psal. 126. 1. 3. 4, 5. Rev. 11. 8, 9. *The witnesses, tho' they were slain, yet are not buried; and the bones, tho' they are dead and dried, yet they are above ground in the open valley*, Ezek. 37. 1, 2. which ministers some assistances to our hope that they shall rise again, and even these dry bones live.

5. Let us cordially concur with the other tribes of our *English Israel*, in driving the *Canaanites* out of our land: This was that which *Moses* indented with the two tribes for, when he settled them on that side *Jordan*, Numb. 32. 20. that they should give the best help they could, to their brethren in their war against the common enemy: and still there are *Canaanites* in our land; vice and prophaneness, and debauchery, are the enemies I mean, which war against both our civil and sacred interests; and as it is said of the remainder of the *Canaanites*, Josh. 23. 13. *They are thorns in the eyes of all good men, and a snare to us*. It is too plain to be denied, that iniquity abounds among us, and goes bare-faced: Our air is infected with the poisonous and malignant breath of blasphemous oaths and curses, which are grown so common, that they seem to be idioms of our language. Our land is defiled with drunkenness and uncleanness, which some make a trade of, and others a sport of: The beauty and honour of our religion, is stained by the profanation of the Lord's day, and an atheistical contempt of holy things. *How can we say we are not thus polluted*, Jer. 2. 23. *and shall not God visit for these things; shall not his soul be avenged on such a nation as this?* Have we not reason to expect, that a deluge of judgments, should follow such a deluge

deluge of impieties? And is any thing more the interest of the nation, than to endeavour the rooting out of these *Canaanites*? that if possible they might not be among us, or at least the putting them under tribute, that they may not rule, or bear sway among us; which surely is not a thing impracticable.

Against these *Canaanites*, the government hath by repeated proclamations waged war; and therein God hath given a banner to them that fear him, to be displayed, because of the truth and holiness, *Psal.* 60. 4. And now the enquiry is like that of *Moses* in the gate of the camp, *Exod.* 32. 26. *Who is on the Lord's side?* or that, *Psal.* 94. 16. *Who will rise up for me against the evil doers, or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?* Who will put a hand to so good a work, as the reformation of the morals of our nation? Who will help to bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end, and to drive the unclean spirit out of the land? Let us, in our places, be volunteers in this service, and cheerfully put our necks to this work of the Lord's, that we come not under the brand put upon the nobles of *Tekoa*, *Neh.* 3. 5. When the remains of the *Canaanites* made head so far, as mightily to oppress *Israel*, under *Jabin* and *Sisera*, *Judg.* 4. 23; it was the reproach of the two tribes on the other side *Jordan*, that they came not to the help of their brethren, but basely and ingloriously sneaked, when there was service to be done to the common interest. *Gilead* abode beyond *Jordan*, and *Reuben* among his sheepfolds, *Judg.* 5. 16, 17. which made their division by the river greatly lamented by all thinking men, and occasioned many searchings of heart. Let us be industrious to prevent so ill an effect of our divisions, otherwise unhappy enough. Let us be willing to appear, willing to act, willing to venture, for the promoting

of a reformation, which all good men agree to be necessary. Now is a time (when that blessed cause hath life in it, and we have so many good leaders to follow) to shew ourselves for God, *and valiant for the truth in the earth*, Jer. 9. 3. Are not evil-doers afraid, nor ashamed to appear in opposition to religion and virtue? and shall we be either afraid or ashamed to appear for the defence of them? If we now sit still and say, let our brethren of the ten tribes drive out the *Canaanites* that are among themselves, and we will only look to our own border; surely (as *Moses* told the two tribes) *Numb. 32. 22, 23. we have sinned against the Lord, and besure our sin will find us out.* Nothing will contribute more to the healing of our breaches, and the uniting of us one to another in communion, than a hearty concurrence in this, wherein confessedly we are agreed. When God turns to *our people a pure language*, then, and not till then, *we shall serve him with one consent*; for betwixt them there is a manifest connection, *Zeph. 3. 9.* Holiness and love, purity and unity, mutually befriend and advance each other.

6. Let us be able, with humble confidence, to appeal to God, that our acting separately in building us an altar, is not done in rebellion, or in transgression against the Lord. That we may then approve ourselves to him in the integrity of our hearts, we must take heed *to our spirits: the Lord God of gods, he knows*, and he only knows the thoughts and intents of the heart, and by them he judges of us, and of our actions: that we may approve ourselves to him, it therefore concerns us to do all according to the manner, the appointed manner, *Neb. 8. 18.* and in due order, *1 Chron. 15. 13.* Let us see to it, that our eye be single, and our intentions sincere, and our ends right; for it is a pity a good work should be spoiled, and rendered unacceptable by an ill principle;

principle; that what for the matter of it is good, should become otherwise by a mismanagement.

If it be in pride and vain-glory that we have built us an altar, only *that we may make a fair shew in the flesh, and be like the nations, then it is done in rebellion and in transgression.* To be proud of any ornaments, but especially of those that belong to the solemn assemblies, very ill becomes those who are but dust and ashes, and ought especially to remember that they are so when they draw near to the Lord of glory, *Psal. 29. 2. The beauty of holiness*, in which we are to worship the Lord, *is not that outward adorning of magnificent and curious structures, but the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible*, 1 Pet. 3. 3, 4. To hide pride from his worshippers, God appointed that they should make him an *altar of earth*, *Exod. 20. 24.* or if of stone, *not of hewn stone*, v. 25. The garnishing and enriching of temples, by which a gay humour was indulged, and primitive plainness and simplicity lost, never did any real kindness to the church, but by degrees turned to its prejudice. *Hodie venenum funditur in Ecclesiam.*—If it be in opposition to our brethren, or from a principle of envy, or ill-will to them, it is in rebellion and in transgression; but I hope you have not so learned Christ. Our master will never be pleased with that which is done from a spirit of contradiction to, or contention with our brethren and fellow-servants: The hands lifted up in prayer, will never reach heaven, unless they *be lifted up without wrath and contention*; so it might be rendered, 1 Tim. 2. 8. without disputation, *Jam. 1. 20. the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*, i. e. it neither gains acceptance with him, nor does any real service to him: But if in building this altar, and in all our attendances upon it, we sincerely design the honour and glory of God in Christ, and the spiritual and eternal wel-

fare of our own souls, and the souls of others; if we make every particular opportunity serviceable to the general interests of our Christianity, to further us in our way to God, and fit us for our rest in him; we may then rejoice in the testimony of our consciences, that it is not in rebellion or transgression against the Lord, but in simplicity and godly sincerity that we have built us an altar.

7. If the Lord knows our integrity, let us study how to let *Israel* know it also. Let us demonstrate our good principles, by our agreeable practices, and that will be the best and most effectual way, to convince the world that we have not built this in rebellion, or in transgression against the Lord: our protestations of our integrity and good intentions, will be of no avail, if our actions give our words the lye. When our lights are thus put on a candlestick, and not under a bushel, so that many eyes are upon us, we ought to take care that our light so shine before men, as that they may not only hear our good words, *but see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven*, Mat. 5. 16. This is the method the Apostle prescribes for silencing gain-sayers, *We must effect it by well-doing, for so is the will of God*, 1 Pet. 2. 15. Having a good conscience, let us evidence it by a *good conversation*, ver. 16.

There are three ways by which, if our hearts be upright with God, *Israel* also he shall know it.

(1.) By our serious piety in all the instances of religious worship and devotion. Have we built this for religious worship, and under the umbrage of a zeal for its purity? let us then approve ourselves religious worshippers; let your piety towards God appear in the constancy of your family devotions, which I think no good Christian, that has the charge of a family, dares live in the neglect of. Think not that a church here will excuse for the
want

want of *a church in your houses*, Rom. 16. 5. Tho' public worship have the preference, yet it must not supersede family worship: *this ought you to have done, but not to leave the other undone.* All the faithful seed of *Abraham* must herein be followers of him; that wherever *Abraham* had a tent, God had an altar, at which he called upon the name of the Lord. See *Gen.* 12. 8. 13. 18. Let our houses be *Bethels, houses of God*, that he dwelling in them, we may dwell in the house of the Lord for ever, even all the days of our lives. Let *Joshua's* resolution be yours, *that whatever others do, you and your houses will serve the Lord*, *Psal.* 23. 6. *Josh.* 24. 15. Carry away the impressions made on your souls by publick worship, and bring them with you into your families, and there go over them again, that they may be as a nail fastened in a sure place. It is supposed that the silver shrines for *Diana*, which we read of, *Acts* 19. 24. were copies of *Diana's* temple in miniature, which her worshippers had in their houses, for the use of their families. Had they such respect to a dunghil god, and shall ours be less to the Lord of the whole earth? Religion is then, and not till then, likely to flourish in our land, when all our families are praying families, and nurseries of piety. *Tho' the Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob*, yet in them also he ought to be praised and served as the God of all the families of *Israel*, *Psal.* 87. 2. *Jer.* 31. 1.

Let your piety appear also, by your decent and reverent deportment in our publick assemblies. It is true God looks chiefly at the heart, and *bodily exercise profits little*, *1 Tim.* 4. 8. if alone it profits nothing; but it is as true, that in concurrence with our spirits, we are to glorify God with our bodies, and to present them to him a living sacrifice, *1 Cor.* 6. 20. *Rom.* 12. 1. Tho' the outward expressions of reverence and affection be not an infallible

fallible sign of a serious spirit, (a vain and trifling heart may be covered over with a grave and demure appearance;) yet the outward expressions of carelessness and unconcernedness, I think, are a certain indication of an evil heart of unbelief: if the special presence and inspection of the angels, in our solemn assemblies, should forbid that which is unhandsome, as the Apostle intimates, *1 Cor. 11. 10.* much more should the eye of God upon us oblige us to observe a decorum. Does not even nature teach us, that when we are engaged in serious work, we ought to shew ourselves serious in it? When we are worshipping the great God, we ought to express such an awe of him, as may strike an awe upon others; so that if an unbeliever should come into our assembly, as the Apostle argues, *1 Cor. 14. 24, 25.* he may acknowledge that God is among us, and the fear of God is in us of a truth. The Jews, since their worship came to be a rebellion and transgression against the Lord Christ, have been notoriously irreverent in it; as well did *Isaiah* prophecy of them. *Mat. 15. 7.*

It hath been turned to the reproach of the assemblies of Dissenters, that in shunning superstition they have run into rudeness and irreverence. If any have given occasion for such a reflection, let them bear their own burthen; but I desire that we, in our assembly, may give no offence of that kind. Standing in prayer is spoken of as a gesture proper enough, *Mark 11. 25. when ye stand praying;* but kneeling is certainly the most fit and proper posture in adoration, and should be chosen rather where the convenience of the place (as I hope ours will) and the ability of the person will allow it. *Paul*, when a *Pharisee*, stood and prayed; but afterwards he learnt to bow his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *Eph. 3. 14.*

(2.) By

(2.) By our strict purity in our whole conversation: hereby we must let all that know us know, that in the integrity of our hearts we have done this. Let it be our daily care and exercise *to keep consciences void of offence towards man as well as towards God*: to pretend to purity in our worship, and yet to allow impurity in our lives, is to contradict ourselves. Let all the days of our lives be of a-piece with our sabbath days, and let a thread of holiness run thro' the web of all our actions. The best consecration of our place *will be to consecrate ourselves this day unto the Lord*, Exod. 32. 29. Let your sobriety and temperance, in all your enjoyments, your justice and honesty, in all your dealings, *beautify* that profession, and *adorn* the doctrine of God our Saviour, Tit. 2. 1. and let not the glory of our assembly be stained by any practices unbecoming Christians: *Let your merchandize and your hire be holiness to the Lord*, as is prophesied of Tyre, Isa. 23. 18. and *let every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah, even the common utensils of your houses, be like the bowls before the altar*, Zech. 14. 20, 21. of which *it was said, be ye clean that bear them*, Isa. 52. 11. You that in building yourselves an altar, *have done more than others*, cannot evidence the sincerity of your hearts therein, if in the common instances of justice and friendship, and charity, *you do less than others*. Remember the hint you just now had out of the Psalm that was read in course, Psal. 93. 5. *Holiness becomes thy house, O Lord, for ever*, and therefore unholiness very ill becomes any that belong to it; remember also the good hint you had lately from another hand; that whatever disputes there are about holiness of places, there is none about the holiness of persons; the necessity of that, we are all agreed in, Heb. 12. 14. *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord*.

(3.) By

(3.) By our peaceableness and charity towards our brethren, *Jam. 3. 17, 18.* The wisdom that is from above, is not indeed *pure*, if it be not *peaceable*. The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace, and then it is likely to come up and flourish: they were the sons of peace that bid the Gospel welcome, *Luke 10. 5, 6.* Be at peace with those from whom you differ in opinion, and *receive them not with doubtful disputation, Rom. 14. 1.* Carefully watch that a diversity of communion, cause not an alienation of affection, but be as ready to do any office of love and kindness and respect to those from whom you dissent, as to those with whom you consent; resolve, tho' you differ *from* them, you will not differ *with* them. If our separation be not schismatical in its own nature, (as for my own part I am well satisfied it is not) * let us not at any time make it so by our uncharitable censures, or our unchristian heats and passions.

Be at peace also among yourselves. Let your meeting to worship God in one place prevent and put an end to all the little picques and quarrels which may happen at any time, and *never let us be three against two, and two against three in this house.* Our peaceableness will be both our strength and beauty.

Let me therefore welcome you into this place with the same exhortation with which *St. Paul* takes leave of his friends at *Corinth, Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in love and peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you.*

* See the Author's *Enquiry into the Nature of Schism, with The Lay-man's Reasons for joining with a Congregation of moderate Dissenters.* 1689.

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